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ASSISTING THE DEAD BY VENERATING THE LIVING

Merit Transfer in the Early Buddhist Tradition

JOHN C. HOLT

Death is an inevitable fact of life. For the religious as well as for some others, its occurrence does not necessarily imply life's termination or the final end of conscious being. In most traditional, and even in some post-traditional cultures, death is regarded as a transitional experience, a *rite de passage*: the deceased leaves behind the familiar vicissitudes of human life and enters into a new modality of being beyond. Funeral rites, perhaps the oldest religious rites known to human-kind, serve as a means to facilitate this transition. In this article, it is not my intention to speculate upon the metaphysical truth of this almost ubiquitous pattern of belief and rite. Generally, I am more interested in determining how religious interpretations of death valorize the human meaning of life. For reflection upon the meaning of death is but another way of reflecting upon the central significance of life. Specifically, I will focus upon early Indian Buddhist conceptions of death: their cultural origins, cosmological significance, philosophical rationale, and social implications.

Buddhist interpretations of death did not originate in an historical or cultural vacuum. Conceptions of the after-life, and the prescribed behavior relating to the dead, were modified adaptations of prevailing Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief. This is especially apparent when we examine the beliefs and practices of the early Buddhist laity.

While Buddhist monks were intent upon gaining release from the cyclical *samsāric* pattern of death and rebirth, the laity were fundamentally concerned with performing meritorious actions in this life that would improve their condition in the next. Eventually, a lay person might embark upon the renunciatory monastic path leading to *nirvāṇa*. But until that step was taken, performing moral acts of auspicious karmic efficacy provided the best assurance that

life after death need not be feared. According to this basic Buddhist understanding, one of the most meritorious acts that one might perform consisted of giving gifts to the monastic community and transferring the merit of that action to one's deceased kin. Psychologically and philosophically, giving material amenities to the monastic community and merit to one's departed kin was evidence that the giver had cultivated a healthy mental disposition characterized by selflessness, compassion and charity. Cosmologically, the giver not only increased the likelihood of better rebirth for himself, but also provided an opportunity for deceased kin to share in the karmic benefits of merit. The *Petavatthu*, a popular collection of short sermons belatedly granted Pāli canonical status, frequently describes how one's suffering deceased kin are transferred to a more blissful state by meritorious deeds performed on their behalf. Socially, the effective material transactions involved in merit transfer sustained the monastic community and fostered a reciprocal relationship between the laity and the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. In exchange for receiving material amenities, the sheer presence of virtuous *bhikkhus* presented the laity with an opportunity to make merit. In short, merit transfer was a practical and popular expression of Buddhist piety that was theoretically legitimate, cosmologically potent, and socially redeeming.

From the perspective of the history of religions, this complex of patterns associated with merit transfer also illustrates how the early Buddhist tradition accommodated and transformed fundamental Brāhmaṇical conceptions concerned with the status of the dead and the behavior of the living in relation to the deceased. Before the appearance of Buddhist theories of karmic action, people of the Brāhmaṇical tradition systematically engaged in the performance of rites designed to assist the dead in the nether world. The Buddhist incorporation and rationalization of this Brāhmaṇical pattern reveals an emerging and uniquely Buddhist conception of death which in turn reflects a changing regard for the significance of life. Buddhism has been frequently characterized by Western observers as pre-eminently given to other-worldly pursuits on the basis of its allegedly pessimistic view of this-worldly life. In the following pages, I will contend that Buddhist transformations of Brāhmaṇical beliefs and rites concerning death portray a somewhat different pic-

ture: an increasing importance attached to this-worldly existence and an optimistic ethical imperative to live the good life.

Death and After-Life in the Brāhmaṇical Tradition

The early poets of Vedic tradition rarely speculated upon the fate of the dead. Vedic religion recognized the finitude of human life, but focussed almost exclusively upon maintaining favorable living conditions in this world. Throughout the hymnodic *śaṃhitās* and the later ritualistic *brāhmaṇas*, there exists no systematic or substantial exposition of the nature of the after-life or of the obligations of the living to the dead. Yet, pertinent passages in the funeral hymns of the *Ṛg* and *Atharva Vedas*, when understood within the context of ancient funeral rites still operative within Indian society today, indicate a normative pattern of belief.

The most important passages that relate to the topic of this article concern the conception of a class of beings known as *pitaras* (fathers, ancestors). According to the *Ṛg Veda*, the recently deceased might embark upon one of two paths: one that led to the realm of the *devas* (gods) and one that led to the fathers' world.¹ In a *Ṛg Veda Soma Pavamāna* hymn, the pathway leading to the realm of the *pitaras* tends to be identified as the standard route.² The *Atharva Veda* mentions the *pitaras'* route without any reference to the route leading to the *deva* abode.³ Thus, it seems likely that the pathway leading to the father's world was understood by many to constitute the normative destiny of the deceased.

When the deceased arrived in the father's world, Yama, king of this realm, provided the new arrival with a new body.⁴ In later traditions, including the Buddhist, Yama figures prominently in pronouncing judgement upon the dead.⁵ But in *Ṛg Veda* literature proper, neither he nor Varuṇa, who is frequently associated with the principle of order (*ṛta*), function in this capacity.⁶ After being established in the fathers' realm, the deceased enjoyed various pleasurable amenities in a paradisiac setting. The fathers, bathed in a continual stream of light (a motif that suggests their newly gained heavenly status)⁷ enjoyed a diet that consisted of *svadhā*, (food that provides them with their essential powers),⁸ milk, ghee, honey and *soma* (all of which constitute the traditional sacrificial libations). In short, the realm of the fathers seems to represent an ethereal projec-

tion of the perfect human existence, a scenario which led A. B. Keith to write: "The picture is relatively simple: it is merely the pleasant things of earth to the priestly imagination, heaped upon one another..."⁹

But more importantly, the fathers are imagined as being perfectly capable of determining their own actions on the basis of their own wills.¹⁰ Because they maintain the power to act upon their own volitions, they represent a source of power that can be tapped by the living. Indeed, they appear to be anxious to come to the aid of their surviving kin, especially those descendants who provide for them regularly by offering sacrifices.¹¹ There existed, therefore, a symbiotic relationship between the living and the dead. In *R̥g Vedic* literature, the living call upon the fathers for various types of aid: for assistance in battle, for food, and for rain. However, the primary appeal made by the living is for help in continuing the family lineage.¹² The fathers had a vested interest in furthering the family line; for, in order to be sustained, they needed sacrifices performed in their honor. Thus, they more than welcome appeals for offspring, especially males.

This pattern of relationship between the living and the dead closely resembles the Vedic conception of the relationship between human beings and the *devas*. Just as the majority of Brāhmaṇical rituals were designed to appease the *devas*, thereby sustaining their associated natural and cosmic powers for the purpose of maintaining favorable this-worldly living conditions, so also the fathers, when nourished by ritual sacrifices, would benevolently return the favor of sacrifice by granting boons to descendants. One's ancestors, therefore, were understood to play a continuing active role in the affairs of this-worldly existence.

In later developing Brāhmaṇical tradition, the fate of the dead was somewhat modified. Upaniṣadic conceptions indicate that *pitaras* were not considered immortal, but eventually underwent a dissolution by returning to the five basic elements of the cosmos.¹³ Yet, even with the Upaniṣadic introduction of karmic theories of rebirth, a theodicy which would appear to have displaced the ancient pattern of belief in the *pitaras* status, the fundamental pattern of relationship between the living and the ancestors was not significantly altered. Indeed, the fate of the dead was further

elaborated and the cosmological status of the fathers classified to resemble the three-fold classification of the heavenly *devas*.¹⁴ Corresponding to this developing cosmological schema, a system of ritual sacrifices was designed to insure that the recently deceased could safely ascend through this triple realm of the departed beyond human life. Each generation of ancestors was thought to occupy one of these levels of heaven and to ascend progressively to higher realms until eventual dissolution.

The rites designed to promote the status of the deceased, known as *śrāddha*, continue to be celebrated in contemporary Hindu society even today. Since they are enormously complex, they cannot be fully explored within the context of this article.¹⁵ However, a general description will indicate that the ancient Vedic pattern of reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead was not only preserved, but expanded and intensified.

The *śrāddha* rites indicate that an important function previously assigned to Yama has been assumed by surviving kin. No longer is Yama given the responsibility of providing a newly arrived deceased with a new body; that task is now the responsibility of the family. Further, the deceased is no longer understood to make his way independently to the realm of the fathers by means of "heavenly wings".¹⁶ Immediately after death, the deceased is completely disembodied and exists in a liminal status. His physical human body has been cremated, yet his spirit remains in the vicinity. In this condition, the deceased are known as *preta* (departed). In addition to propitiating previous generations of *pitaras* and aiding them in their journeys through the triple realm beyond, the primary function of the *śrāddha* rites is to transform the deceased from this liminal condition as a *preta* to the status of *pitr* (father). This is done symbolically, in the manner of sympathetic magic, by ritually fashioning a body out of rice balls (*piṇḍa*) during the first ten days after death.¹⁷ During each of the first ten days after death, a new *piṇḍa* is created representing a vital part of the new body. On the eleventh day, after the rice-body (*piṇḍa-pitr*) is complete, a complex series of additional rites is held. Of chief importance among them is the feasting of the ancestral fathers and the newly deceased, all of which are symbolically represented by a group of eleven priestly specialists.¹⁸ Through the first eleven days, the mood of *śrāddha* is

generally one of mourning; but on the twelfth day, the concluding rite known as *sapīṇḍikārana* is held. This is the specific occasion during which the recently deceased symbolically joins his ancestors and becomes established as a *pitr*.¹⁹ Without the performance of these rituals, the deceased remain as *pretas* and are regarded as a source of danger to the living.²⁰ But once established as a *pitr*, they gain new bodies and thus regain social status.

Just exactly when this distinction between *preta* and *pitr* emerged within Brāhmaṇical tradition is difficult to assert with any certainty. According to Hopkins,²¹ the distinction is already assumed in epic literature. Keith believed that the distinction “can perhaps be traced right back to Sāṅkhayana”,²² a conjecture that would date the tradition as far back as the time of the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*. Barua insists that even during the lifetime of the Buddha, the holy pilgrimage site of Gayā existed as an auspicious site for the performance of rites transforming *pretas* to *pitras*.²³ Far more convincing is Knipe’s analysis in which he concludes that the *śrāddha* feasts have their origins in the period of *brāhmaṇa* texts and were steadfastly preserved in the *sūtras* and the *sāstras*.²⁴ These critical considerations suggest that the pattern of ritual activity designed to promote the deceased from the status of *preta* to *pitr* was prevalent before the emergence of specifically Buddhist conceptions.²⁵

The *śrāddha* rites were/are a context for the expression of a number of social and religious beliefs relating to death. For surviving kin, these rites provide an acceptable social forum for the expression of grief, a means to grapple with the sense of loss which accompanies any encounter with death. Those closest in kin to the deceased are also supported emotionally by the presence of other family relations. In addition, because previously deceased ancestors are remembered and symbolically present during the ritual process, the *śrāddha* rites also constitute a type of family reunion for both the dead and the living. Consequently, the collective heritage of the family is recalled, and familial kinship lines are both publicly and privately affirmed.

More importantly, *śrāddha* constitutes the fulfilment of an obligation. By assuring the well-being of the deceased in the after-life, a debt of filial piety is settled. And if surviving family members hope to sustain a positive reciprocal relationship with the deceased in the

future, and thus call upon his power as a *pitr* in times of need, they must first establish him in a venerable state. Providing for the ancestors by means of ritual service is a basic familial responsibility, a way of expressing thanks for their contributions to family life. A neglected ancestor, especially one that remains as a *preta*, can become a meddlesome nuisance or a source of serious family trouble.

For these reasons, *śrāddha* functions effectively as a ritual technique: it serves as a device which establishes the deceased in a state where the mutual interests of the living and the dead can be realized; and it provides a means for coping with death's existential sting and the period of social pollution which immediately follows death's occurrence.

To sum up, before the emergence of the Buddhist tradition, Brāhmaṇical conceptions of the after-life were somewhat paradisiac, providing that the ritual obligations incumbent upon the living were met. After the performance of ritual transactions designed to facilitate the deceased's transition from *preta* to *pitr*, the relationship between the living and the dead was conceived to be reciprocal in nature, an extended dimension of kinship relations.

Modifications of Brāhmaṇical Beliefs in the Pāli Canon

Although the *Petavatthu* contains a rich source of information reflecting early Buddhist understandings of the after-life, other portions of the Pāli canon generally considered antecedent to the *Petavatthu* contain a number of relevant passages to our discussion. From these passages, to be found in the *Vinaya* and the four principle *Nikāyas*, it is clear that important modifications of prevailing understandings had already taken place, while some conceptions had been completely abandoned.

One of the most conspicuous changes in the developing Buddhist cosmological view concerns the fact that the blissful abode of the fathers, or a path specifically followed by one's deceased ancestors, is nowhere to be found. What this seems to suggest is that, along with the decline in importance attached to the worship of *devas*, ancestor veneration suffered a similar dimunition. This does not necessarily imply that Buddhism rejected the importance of the family, although this accusation was often levelled against the tradi-

tion by Brāhmaṇical rivals.²⁶ There are numerous instances within the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya* where the Buddha enjoins his disciples to honor father and mother. Indeed, honoring one's parents and serving them was a cardinal teaching for the laity.²⁷ However, the absence of a corresponding conception paralleling the Brāhmaṇical *pitr* status, and the fact that no ritual device similar to *śrāddha* or *sapīṇḍīkarana* is mentioned in early Buddhist literature, indicates differing assumptions regarding the fate of the dead. Specifically, it means that the recently deceased do not *ipso facto* gain a bliss-filled and honored position in the after-life as a result of sacrificial ritual techniques or because of their status as family ancestors.

According to the Buddhist understanding, the destiny of the deceased is directly the consequence of how well he conducted himself morally during his human life span. While this idea of karmic retribution was certainly permeating Brāhmaṇical thought during this time, it never completely succeeded in supplanting the patterns of belief and rite that we have described earlier in this paper. Ancestor veneration, and attendant conceptions of the after-life, existed side by side with the theory of karma. In early Buddhist literature, however, the karmic theory of moral retribution became the basic cornerstone for developing lore portraying life after death.

Unlike the fate of the *pitaras* and their after-worldly existence, the notion of *preta* was not abandoned by the Buddhists. It was, however, dramatically transformed in significance. *Petas* (Pāli for Sanskrit *preta*) were no longer considered to be potentially dangerous beings existing in a liminal phase of transition between the statuses of human being and *pitr*. According to the *Vinaya* and the *Nikāyas*, the term *peta* could still refer to a recently deceased,²⁸ but it might also refer to a being who had been deceased for quite a long period of time.²⁹ The realm in which *petas* dwell, *petaloka*, occupied a fixed position in the cosmos; and, whenever the different strata of conditioned *samsāric* existence are mentioned, it is identified as a realm existing immediately below the realm of human beings, yet still above the animal realm and the tortuous hells.³⁰ While the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya* do not specifically elaborate upon the conditions of *petas*, they do assume that they suffer from gruesome and lurid afflictions which make them less than human. The *Vinaya* even refers to *petas* as a way of defining that which is not human.³¹

The fact that both *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunni Vinayas* prescribe disciplined behavior in relation to *petas* indicates that it was commonly believed that *petas* could appear within the human realm.³² Despite their gruesome condition, there is no evidence suggesting that *petas* were regarded as a dreaded source of mischief. On the other hand, their status is referred to as “untimely” because they merely realize the fruit of action and cannot initiate works on their own accord.³³ The *Mahāvastu*, while not a Pāli source, holds them in the same regard. It contains a vivid account of how *petas* as hungry ghosts, grieve over their powerless condition.³⁴

Furthermore, the *peta* status did not amount to a destiny or transitional phase through which all recently deceased must pass. The *Anguttara Nikāya* states that only those who commit one of the “ten wrong ways of action” are destined for rebirth in *petaloka*.³⁵ The *Samyutta Nikāya* echoes the same generalization but states it positively: those who are virtuous in upholding the *pañcasīla*³⁶ (the five basic moral precepts) or “walk in faith”³⁷ will avoid *petaloka*. These passages consistently predicate existence as a *peta* upon the living of an irreligious life. There is, however, one reference in the *Anguttara Nikāya* which seems to preserve the Brāhmaṇical association of *pretas* with neglected familial obligations: those who live an immoral life by not honoring father and mother, such as recluses and brahmins, will be judged by Yama as “abusers” destined for *petaloka*, the animal realm, or *Niraya* hell.³⁸ Neglecting one’s parents is considered pre-eminently “immoral”. Thus, the Buddhist inclusion of this Brāhmaṇical motif is clothed within the context of an ethical injunction.

There are many passages in the *Nikāyas* expressing a low regard for ritual sacrifice, but only two that refer to *Brāhmaṇical* funeral practices and none that indicate a specifically Buddhist practice. The first reference to *Brāhmaṇical* practice occurs in the *Tevijja Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*³⁹ and scoffs at prayers to Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Iṣana, Brahmā and Prajāpati to aid the deceased in becoming united with Brahman after death. Thus, this passage does not refer to the intentions of *śrāddha* and *sapīṇḍakārana*. But a second passage found in the *Salāyatana Book* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*⁴⁰ does. The son of a snake charmer and apparently a village headman asks the Buddha about the practices of brahmins who, when a man has died, “lift

him up and carry him out, call on him by name, and speed him heavenwards''. The Buddha's reply is in the form of questions directed at the headman and signals the Buddhist orthodox doctrinal attitude toward the central function of *sapiṇḍikāraṇa*. In short, the Buddha asks if murderers, liars, backbiters, etc. will attain heaven even if a multitude sing his praises and say: "May this man, when body breaks up, after death be reborn in the Happy Lot, in the Heaven World". The Buddha then compares such a practice to commanding a huge rock to float on water. Finally, he says that only those who abide by the basic moral precepts attain heaven. Ethical action has replaced ritual technique.

Briefly, Buddhist canonical literature antecedent to the *Petavatthu* reveals significant departures from prevailing Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite. The most important change involves the dominating presence of the karmic theory of moral retribution in determining the nature of the after-life. The destiny of the deceased was not determined on the basis of ritual devices, nor by one's ancestral status. Rather, the nature of existence in after-life depended solely on the moral quality of human actions. While the status of *pitr* was abandoned, the status of *preta* was transformed. No longer considered as a liminal phase, it represented a suffering existence awaiting those who had acted immorally while among the living. Unlike the deceased ancestors of Brāhmaṇical tradition, these Buddhist dead are powerless. There is no reciprocal relationship between human and superhuman beings; and there is no textual evidence suggesting that the living perform any type of actions on behalf of the dead. This brings us to the significance of *Petavatthu* literature.

The Significance of Merit Transference in Petavatthu Literature

The *Petavatthu* (literally: "Stories of the Departed") is an anthology of short stories purportedly *Buddhavācana* ("sayings" ascribed to the Buddha). However, its content and style are decidedly at odds with the four principal *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya*. As those texts bear the heavy stamp of scholastic formulation, *Petavatthu* literature belies a folkloristic origin. While it is impossible to reconstruct the reasons for its inclusion within the canon, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was belatedly included because of

its widespread popular appeal among the laity. The *Mahāvamsa* claims that Mahiṇḍa, Asoka's missionary son to Śrī Lankā, recited the text as one of his first ploys to convert the island masses to Buddhism.⁴¹ Henry Gehman, who first translated the anthology into English in 1938, believes that the stories were utilized by monks in preaching sermons to the laity. Overemphasizing, and reducing the importance of the text to a "mercenary motivation", he suggests that the exclusive purpose of the stories was to raise material support for the monastic community.⁴² By that, he implies that the sole intent behind the giving of canonical status to the text was to cajole the laity into actively and lavishly patronizing the monastic community. There is no doubt that this motif is central to the text and we shall explore its significance more fully in subsequent pages. But the full meaning of the stories cannot be completely comprehended if we confine our analysis to a materialistic interpretation based upon an analysis of the patron/client relationship.

These stories may have been delivered as sermons by monks, but they reflect basic religious assumptions intrinsic to the spiritual world view of the common folk. Consequently, fundamental Brāhmanical assumptions, abandoned or ignored in more scholastic texts, resurface in the *Petavatthu* clothed in new garb. Although veneration of the dead and grieving over their departure from life is firmly discouraged in at least six of the fifty-one tales,⁴³ the ancient Brāhmanical belief that the living in some way benefit the dead in their after-life existence persists. The new means by which this is accomplished is through the transfer of merit, a practice advocated in eighteen stories.⁴⁴

The structure of the plot of the overwhelming majority of *Petavatthu* stories follows a fixed formula. A certain individual, almost always a lay person,⁴⁵ commits an immoral action out of selfishness, hatred, or delusion. When that individual dies, he or she is reborn in *petaloka*, suffering from a condition of woe physically mirroring the nature of the committed wrong.⁴⁶ The *peta* then appears to the living, sometimes to a surviving kinsman,⁴⁷ who recoils in disgust. The *peta* then proceeds to tell how his misconduct resulted in such a hideous condition of suffering. Either the story ends at this point, as it does in twenty-eight stories⁴⁸ with the lesson of karmic retribution vividly illustrated, or it continues. If con-

tinued, the *peta* makes a request: the living should offer a gift to the *bhikkhusaṅgha* and transfer the merit derived from that virtuous action to the suffering *peta*. Once the gift is made, the *peta* is greatly relieved of physical torment and very often transformed into the status of a *deva*.⁴⁹ The brief tale that follows is highly illustrative of the style and content of most of the stories. It contains the basic patterns of belief and practice which make *Petavatthu* literature distinctive and relevant to the purpose of this discussion.

THE STORY OF NANDĀ

While the Teacher was living at Jetavana, he told this story:

In a certain village not far from Sāvattthī there was a certain disciple believing and pious. His wife, Nandā by name, however, was unbelieving, irreligious, avaricious, quick-tempered, rough in her speech, and disrespectful and disobedient to her husband; she would rail like a drum and indulge in abuse. Dying and reborn as a *petī*, she sojourned near that same village. Then one day she appeared before the lay disciple Nandasena, as he was coming out of the village. When he saw her, he addressed her with this stanza:

1. "Dark and ugly appearance you are; your body is rough and you are horrible to behold. You are red-eyed; you have yellow teeth. I deem that you are not human".

The *Petī*:

2. "I am Nandā, Nandasena; formerly I was your wife. For having been abusive, I went hence to the *peta*-world".

Nandasena:

3. "Now what wicked deed was committed by body, speech, or mind? In consequence of what act have you gone from here to the *peta*-world"?

The *Petī*:

4. "I was wrathful and rough in speech, and I also showed no reverence to you. Therefore, for using abusive language, I went from here to the *peta*-world".

Nandasena:

5. "Come, I give you a cloak; put on this garment. When you have put it on, come, I will lead you home.

6. Clothes and food and drink you shall obtain, if you come home. You will behold your sons, and you shall see your daughter a villain”.

The Petī:

7. “What is given by your hand into mine does not profit me. But as regards the monks, who are abounding in the moral precepts, free from passion, and learned,

8. Regale them with food and drink and transfer to me the benefit of the gift. Then I shall be happy, blest in the fulfilment of all desires”.

9. Then promising with the words, “Very well”, he made abundant gifts: food, drink, solid food, clothes, dwelling, umbrellas, perfumes, wreathes, and various kinds of sandals. After he had refreshed with food and drink the monks who were abounding in the moral precepts, free from passion, and learned, he transferred to her the virtue of the gift.

10. Immediately thereafter, when credit for this was transferred to her, the result came to pass. Of the gift, this was the fruit: food, clothes, and drink.

11. Then pure, having clean clothes, wearing the finest Benares cloth, bedecked with various garments and ornaments, she approached her husband.

Nandasena:

12. “O devī, you are of excellent appearance, you are illuminating all the regions like the morning star.

13. Because of what do you have such an appearance? On account of what is happiness your portion here, and why fall to your lot whatever pleasures are dear to the heart?

14. I ask you, devī, very powerful one, you who have become human, what good deed have you done? Why have you such radiant majesty, and why does your splendour illuminate all the regions”?

The petī:

15. “I am Nandā, Nandasena; formerly I was your wife. For having committed an evil deed, I went from here to the peta-world. Through the gift given by you, I rejoice, being free from fear from any quarter.

16. May you live long, householder, with all your kinsmen; may you attain the abode free from sorrow and passion, the dwelling of those who have willpower.

17. Here living the religious life and giving gifts, householder, may you remove the stain of selfishness together with its roots and enter heaven blameless''.⁵⁰

The central teaching of *Petavatthu* literature is the efficacy of karmic actions. Consistent with this bedrock assumption, Nandā suffers as a *petī* for her misguided human actions. The major doctrinal dilemma herein concerns the problem of how to integrate the theory of karma with what, at first sight, appears to be undoctinal behavior, e.g., performing actions on behalf of the dead which promote their status in the after-life.⁵¹ Maurice Winternitz referred to this practice as a serious blemish on the theory of karmic determinism.⁵² In the following pages of analysis, we shall first identify Brāhmaṇical patterns present in this story, discuss the theoretical rationale for their inclusion (especially the practice of merit transfer), and determine the sociological implications for their accommodation. Finally, we shall conclude with some general remarks concerning how this Buddhist transformation of Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite relating to the dead reflects an increasing valorization of the human condition.

Nandā's request that her husband perform actions on her behalf is sharply reminiscent of *śrāddha* and *sapīṇḍikarāṇa* ritual intentions. The status that her husband wins for her, *devī*, is much akin to the heavenly career of a *pitr*. Transfigured from the status of *petī*, she not only enjoys the satisfying worldly amenities of food and drink, but she also gains a new lustrous body. In addition, Nandā expresses her wish that her surviving family will be long-lived, a motif that we first identified as a concern of the *pitaras* (fathers) for the family. Thus, three fundamental patterns of Brāhmaṇical origin are present: the deceased is transformed from the status of *preta* to heavenly existence and given a new body, a potent and vicarious action on the deceased's behalf facilitates such a transfiguration, and concern for the continuation of family lineage is expressed. If our analysis ended at this juncture of the discussion, we might conclude that the *Petavatthu* simply offers old wine in new bottles. But this is not entirely the case.

The *Petavatthu* stories are saturated with illustrations of karmic retribution. It is, as we have indicated, the fundamental teaching of the anthology. The initial episodes of Nandā's story are but a series of images reflecting an orthodox doctrinal understanding of the karmic process at work. In the opening scene, Nandā's spiritual demeanor is compared to that of her believing and pious husband. It is clear that it is her disposition, the qualitative state of her mind as conditioned by the *āsavas* (*rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha*: passion, hatred, and delusion), which generate her abusive actions. And when she appears to Nandasena, he immediately asks: "Now, what wicked deed was committed by body, speech, or mind"? This three-fold formula is consistently used throughout the *Vinaya* and the *Nikāyas* to designate the means by which behavioral expressions mirror mental disposition.⁵³ In an often cited passage of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha says: "O bhikkhus, it is volition that I call karma. Having willed, one acts through body, speech, and mind".⁵⁴ In the case of Nandā, it is clear that she either does not have the discipline to control the *āsavas* by means of mental discrimination (*viññāna*),⁵⁵ or if she does, she refuses to exercise her will to act right. The abstract principles expressed in this example constitute the Theravāda understanding of karma: a mentally unhealthy disposition causally produces immoral actions which in turn produce a perpetuation of suffering. In other words: psychological conditioning of the mind leads to behavioral expressions in the social context which have future cosmic soteriological consequences. One's future status in the after-life according to this perspective, is wholly determined by one's ability to will into action a morally wholesome demeanor. It is precisely this ethic, so heavily emphasized in the Pāli canon, that has led many Western observers to typologize Theravāda Buddhism as a religion of "self-effort", rather than as a "religion of grace".⁵⁶

Now the question arises: how can the strict determinism of karmic retribution reconcile the merit transferring activities that Nandasena performs on behalf of his wife? Or on what theoretical bases can Buddhism legitimate its incorporation of this originally Brāhmaṇical pattern of belief?

A traditionally Buddhist explanation has been given by Malalasekera.⁵⁷ In explaining how *parivaṭṭa* (transferring merit) is

consistent with the Buddhist theory of karma, he focuses his discussion upon the mental dispositions of both the doer of the deed (in our example, Nandasena) and the beneficiary (Nandā). With reference to the doer, he says: “The act of sharing one’s good fortune is a deed of compassion and friendliness and, as such, very praiseworthy and meritorious”.⁵⁸ In other words, the act of giving (*dāna*), is ethically productive because it is rooted in a selfless disposition of compassion directed toward the assuaging of another’s suffering. With reference to the beneficiary, he says: “the recipient of the transfer becomes a participant of the original deed by associating himself with it. Thus the identification of himself with both the deed and the doer can sometimes result in the beneficiary getting even greater merit than the original doer, either because his elation is greater or because his appreciation of the value of deed is more intellectual, and therefore more meritorious”.⁵⁹ Re-emphasizing the importance of the mind’s condition, he goes on to say that “what is significant is that in order to share in the good deed done by another, there must be approval of it and joy in the beneficiary’s heart... Here, too, as in all actions, it is the thought which according to Buddhism, really matters”.⁶⁰ Malalasekera’s theoretical explanation thus renders the story of Nandā and her transformation doctrinally acceptable. According to this perspective, Nandā’s transformation from *petī* to *devī* results from her husband’s compassionate act of selfless giving and her own ability to intellectually appreciate, and therefore *rejoice* in the virtue of a meritorious deed.

This rationale for merit transfer, based upon the theory of karma, begs a comparison with the Brāhmaṇical rationale. First, it is clear that like their Brāhmaṇical counterparts, Buddhist *petas* remain dependent upon the living to perform catalytic actions on their behalf. However the Buddhist transformation of *petas* involves a transformation of mind, and not just body. The shining luminescence of the *devī* status is but a cosmological reflection of Nandā’s newly found spiritually healthy mind. Second, as Knipe notes with reference to the Brāhmaṇical *sapīṇḍīkarana* transaction, the transformation of *pretas* to *pitaras* involved the liturgical application of an ancient cosmogonic model to an individual’s postcremation passage. With such an “understanding of the passage of the

deceased as a cosmogonic progression,... an individual's salvation [was] dependent on the correct ritual activity of his descendants".⁶¹ In comparison, the Buddhist incorporation of this deep-seated Brāhmaṇical belief is justified on a psychological and ethical basis, rather than upon the magical efficacy of ritual actions.

It needs to be noted, however, that the psychological and (therefore) ethical explanation by Malalasekera is something of an *ad hoc* rationalization legitimating actions performed on behalf of the dead on karmalogical grounds. Gombrich has examined the issue thoroughly by focussing upon the changed meaning of the term *anumodana*, the word used by Malalasekera to connote "rejoicing".⁶² On the basis of his philological study, he has determined that *anumodana* originally conveyed a meaning of thanksgiving, or gratitude, that existed between the doer of an action and its beneficiary.⁶³ Only when merit transfer required doctrinal justification did its meaning shift from "gratitude" to "joy" or "empathy in joy".⁶⁴ Gombrich suggests that this shift in meaning probably occurred around two thousand years ago,⁶⁵ or about the time of the *Petavatthu's* collation. Thus, the substance of Malalasekera's argument is by no means new. Indeed, the theoretical framework of the *Petavatthu* has implicitly incorporated it. Moreover, in almost all of the *Petavatthu* stories, the protagonists (those who have committed irreligious acts) hardly inspire a spirit of gratitude or thanksgiving amongst their surviving kin. Rather, the most obvious motivations for survivors to perform merit transfer on behalf of the dead are compassion and selfless giving, motivations which agree much more easily with the karmic theory of action.

Yet, as Gombrich further has pointed out, there is one passage in what could be one of the most ancient strands of *Petavatthu* literature that gives, as a rationale for merit transfer, the motive of gratitude or thanksgiving. The passage is also found in the *Tirokuḍḍa Sutta* of the *Khuddakapāṭha* and constitutes the Buddha's explanation to King Bimbisāra of the plight of the *petas*. Here we find the stanza:

He gave to me, he worked for me,
He was my kin, my friend, my intimate,
Give gifts, then, for the departed ones,
Recalling what they used to do.⁶⁶

In this passage, which on the whole constitutes a theoretical anomaly in the *Petavatthu*, we find the same motive for merit transfer amongst Buddhists as we did for *Śrāddha* amongst Brāhmaṇical counterparts. Just as Brāhmaṇical family survivors fulfilled their dharmic obligations out of gratitude for the deceased family member, so are Buddhists here enjoined to do the same. Gombrich's analysis has succeeded in identifying the cultural and social roots of Buddhist merit transfer in Brāhmaṇical tradition. The stories of the *Petavatthu*, therefore, for the most part, provide a new Buddhist theoretical basis for the continuation of this popular act of piety.

There remains, however, one other doctrinal consideration which Malalasekera and Gombrich have not examined in any great depth. This concerns the role of *bhikkhus* in the merit transfer transaction within the context of the *Petavatthu*'s karmalogical rationale. *Bhikkhus* are considered the virtuous objects of such actions and their presence makes possible the fortunate consequences that result for the deceased. Within this karmalogical understanding, the qualitative condition of the object is just as important as the mental condition of the subject if the action is to bear genuinely auspicious fruit.⁶⁷ In this connection, we can understand the importance of the collective ritual life of the monastic community. It constitutes, primarily, an aggregate expression of the *bhikkhus*' continuously "pure" moral status.⁶⁸ In other words, it legitimates *bhikkhus* as being worthy objects of meritorious actions. It makes them an indispensable part of merit transfer; for *petas*, because of their irreligious acts that result in lowly spiritual conditions, cannot fulfil this doctrinally needed function. That is why in our example of *Petavatthu* literature, virtuous *bhikkhus*, rather than the *peti* Nandā, must be the object of Nandasena's action. Moreover, explicit recognition of the *bhikkhus*' status is made when Nandā describes them as "abounding in moral precepts, free from passion, and learned". Nanda's three-fold description is but another way of identifying the religious life of the *bhikkhus* with the three-fold basis of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path: *sīla* ("abounding in moral precepts"), *samādhī* ("free from passion") and *paññā* ("learned"). What this again illustrates is the karmalogical rationale for merit transfer replacing Brāhmaṇical faith in ritual techniques. And

within the context of this rationale, the act of merit transfer constitutes a cultic celebration of that which symbolizes the Buddha's Dhamma: the presence of *bhikkhus*. Hence, the spiritual values intrinsic to the Buddha's Dhamma replace those cultically expressed within the *śrāddha* rites (filial piety as a dharmic obligation). Consequently, the *bhikkhusaṅgha* replaces the "extended" Brāhmaṇical family as the primary socio-religious unit of importance in conjunction with patterns of belief and rite related to the deceased.⁶⁹ This brings us to our final consideration.

Socio-religious Implications of the Petavatthu Rationale

Within the scope of the *Petavatthu*'s teachings, *bhikkhus* not only replace the Brāhmaṇical family as the primary socio-religious unit, but they also replace the deceased as cultic objects of veneration. We have already noted that in early Buddhism, there existed no reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead. However, like the Brāhmaṇical priest of the *śrāddha* rites performed on the eleventh day of ritual observance, *bhikkhus* continue the tradition of symbolizing the presence of the dead as well.

As we noted in our brief scenario of the *śrāddha* transaction, the fashioning of *piṇḍas* (rice balls) plays a key role: they are a symbol of the newly created body for the deceased and also constitute food offerings to the dead in order to allay hunger and thirst.⁷⁰ The practice of giving alms in the Buddhist context (the virtuous action performed by Nandasena in our example) is known within Buddhist circles as *piṇḍapāta* ("the casting of pinda"). Thus, *piṇḍas* are the alms which literally provide sustenance for the *bhikkhus*. Like the libations of the ancient ritual sacrifice that sustained *pitaras*, and like the *piṇḍas* of *śrāddha*, this giving of alms represents one side of an important reciprocal relationship. But here, the reciprocal relationship is strictly between the living.

Motifs associating the dead with *bhikkhus* are not entirely lacking in Buddhist tradition. In addition to the practice of *piṇḍapāta*, *bhikkhus* are often referred to as those who have "gone forth" (*pabbajā*—the term signaling the rite of renouncing society and gaining a new rebirth within the sacred world of Buddhist monasticism). As many scholars have indicated, this renunciation theoretically renders the initiate as "dead to the world", separated from the

world of the laity.⁷¹ And further, because *bhikkhus* are living the paradigmatic existence laid down by the Tathāgata (the one who has “gone forth”—the Buddha), they symbolize the urge to overcome rebirth, to go beyond (*pāraṅgata*).⁷²

If we can speak of a relationship between the living and the “dead” in early Buddhism, it is the reciprocal relationship existing between the laity and *bhikkhus*. As *pitaras* were a source of power to be tapped by the Brāhmaṇical living, so are *bhikkhus* in the Buddhist context. Throughout the *Petavatthu* and other early Buddhist literature, the Buddha and his followers (the *bhikkhusaṅgha*) are consistently identified as the most auspicious fields for the making of merit. Whenever actions are performed which take either Buddha or Saṅgha as their object, powerful karmic consequences, such as the transfiguration of *petas*, result. Thus in return for *piṇḍapāta*, *bhikkhus* become a source of transformative spiritual power for the laity.

Within the practice of *piṇḍapāta*, those sacrificial offerings formerly given to ancestors through Brāhmaṇical priests are now given to the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. The *Petavatthu* pedagogically supports this tradition but justifies it on the basis of the spiritual virtues associated with the path that *bhikkhus* symbolize. That is, gifts given to the *bhikkhus* have a different motivational basis than in the Brāhmaṇical context (they are not given because the *bhikkhu* is a priest who possesses special knowledge necessary to make ritual observance efficacious). It is impossible to assess whether or not the *Petavatthu* compilers included various stories within the collection on the basis of whether or not alms to *bhikkhus* were advocated. Only twenty-four out of the 51 explicitly promote the practice.⁷³ However, wherever the idea of merit-transfer is inculcated, gifts to the *bhikkhus* are required without exception. How do we evaluate this pattern? Is it the consequence of the need to make merit-transfer karmalogically consistent (*bhikkhus* are needed as virtuous objects to make the action productive)? Or, as Gehman asserts, were the stories of *Petavatthu* canonized because they are aimed at exacting alms from the laity by means of threatening them with the possibility of becoming *petas*? To agree completely with Gehman is to strip the text of any spiritual significance and to blandly ignore the nature of the transactions we have tried to describe. While there are, no doubt,

unscrupulous clerics present in all ages and places, we would do much better by seeing the practice of *piṇḍapāta* as maintaining two ancient Indian practices rooted in Brāhmaṇical tradition. The first is obvious: holy men in India have been supported from time immemorial through the giving of alms by the laity. The second is that, within the Buddhist context, the entity sustained by these practices is the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. That is, as the *śrāddha* rites and *sapiṇḍikarāṇa* sustain the “extended” Brāhmaṇical family in this-world and the next, so does the analogous Buddhist practice sustain the *Saṅgha*, which constitutes the primary sociological unit within the Buddhist purview. Giving alms to *bhikkhus*, then, is at once the continuation of a general tradition and the consequence of substituting one socio-religious entity for another in a newly emerging religious communal structure. How calculated this substitution was, in fact remains a moot question. That it could be doctrinally legitimated is evident from our discussion.

Summarizing our argument, we may say that Buddhist transformations of Brāhmaṇical patterns of belief and rite pertaining to death and the after-life indicate an increasing importance attached to this-worldly activity. Life beyond death was determined by the quality of moral actions performed before death. Various cosmological realms were envisaged as reflecting the mental conditions of the living. The dead assumed their after-life status on the basis of their mental dispositions as humans rather than upon their status as ancestors. Further, the dead were stripped of their power to act efficaciously in the human realm and became totally dependent upon actions performed on their behalf by the living. Consequently, the relationship between the living and the dead ceased to be symbiotic and became unilateral. While assisting the dead in the after-life constitutes a continuation of Brāhmaṇical belief, the Buddhists fashioned their own theoretical justification based upon the ideas of karmic retribution. Here, merit transfer became a virtuous action because both doer and beneficiary could recognize and rejoice in the intrinsic goodness of the act. And rather than constituting an act of ancestor veneration, merit transfer, an action involving support for the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, constituted a cultic veneration of the Buddha’s Dhamma, which was symbolized by the presence of virtuous *bhikkhus*. As such, the *Saṅgha* replaced the

ancestors and the Brāhmaṇical family as the primary social unit of importance in connection with actions performed on behalf of the dead. Each of these transformations reflect either an ethicization of this-worldly action or an increasing importance attached to the efficacy of human life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this discussion in no way exhausts the significance of merit transfer or ancestor worship in Indian religious traditions. In Buddhist tradition, the idea of merit transfer was largely expanded in the various Mahāyana schools. It became the means by which *bodhisattvas* such as Kṣitigarbha and Amitābha were thought to rescue suffering sentient beings from the rounds of *saṃsāric* rebirth. In the Burmese, Sinhalese and Thai Theravāda traditions, merit transfer continued to play a role in funeral rites and memorial services for the dead.

The patterns of relationship between the living and the dead which we have discussed in this paper also underwent further transformations within the burgeoning classical Hindu tradition. In the *Purāṇas*,⁷⁴ the meaning of the *śrāddha* rites was brought within the karmic framework of the *saṃsāra/mokṣa* (rebirth/release) soteriological formula. Undertaking pilgrimage to Gayā became a ritually meritorious action believed to assure the attainment of *mokṣa* for departed kin as well as for the pilgrim-participant.⁷⁵ Because the Buddha, understood within this context to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and Bodh Gayā, understood to be an auspicious site of sacred power, figure heavily in this Hindu pilgrimage process, Buddhist patterns of belief and action were in turn modified and reincorporated within the ever-absorbing Hindu religious tradition. These developments await further study.

Furthermore, the Buddhist transformations with which we have been concerned must be seen as only a portion of a general process at work during the historical epoch when the *Petavatthu* was collated. While Buddhism may have originated as primarily a cloistered community of ascetic mendicants, by the time of the Emperor Aśoka, it had become a religion of mass appeal: that is, it had begun to develop an appealing lay ethos of its own. Consequently, it appropriated, in addition to motifs associated with ancestor

veneration, such practices as *paritta* (reciting scriptural passages as a means of generating magical protection), offering prayers to the Buddha (in hopes of enlisting his powerful assistance), and reciting the Buddha's name (as another means of gaining protection). Like merit transfer, these practices can be strictly understood as "undoc-trinal", for they have no canonical basis. It must be remembered, however, that the canon was always the basis for monastic religious life and as such is the product of the monastic mindset. Even the goal of heaven, which became the goal of the laity and the believed destiny of transformed *petas*, was never the advocated goal of the monastic path. It was regarded as only another state of transitory existence that must ultimately be transcended. However, its promulgation amongst the laity by the monastic community, as evidenced by the *Petavatthu* collection, suggests that the monastic community eventually recognized the need for a broader soteriological appeal if the religion were to be sustained practically. To that end, scholastics may have doctrinally legitimated such behavior as merit transfer in order to further the needs of the religion, both materially and spiritually. In so doing, they paradoxically, on the level of doctrine, encouraged the attainment of a conditioned *saṃsāric* existence (heaven) for an increasing number of their lay constituency. The Buddhist transformation of patterns of belief and rite associated with the dead, then, was but part of this popularizing process. At the same time, it gave sanction to a religiously deep-seated and culturally ancient impulse to assist the dead in the after-life and also emphasized the re-emerging importance of the heavenly goal, i.e. a goal readily attainable by the living of a morally wholesome life. As such, it revalorized the importance of actions performed in the human realm, thus reasserting the soteriological significance of this-worldly existence.

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¹ *The Hymns of the Rg Veda*, 2nd ed., trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith, 2 vols. (Benares: E. J. Lazarus, 1897), 2:514.

² *Rg Veda* 2:381-2. Here, the realm of the fathers is referred to as "deathless", and the sacrificer asks to be made immortal.

³ *Atharva-Veda Samhitā*, ed. Charles R. Lanman, trans. William D. Whitney, 2 vols., Harvard Oriental Series, Vols. VII-VIII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1905), 1:206.

⁴ *Rg Veda* 2:399; X. 14, 7-8. David Knipe notes in his “*Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven”, in Frank E. Reynolds and Earl H. Waugh, eds., *Religious Encounters with Death: Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religion* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977): 113, that “sometimes it is Agni who is requested to supervise this union of the departed’s new life with a new body. (10.16.5; 10.15.14)”.

⁵ See, for instance, *The Collection of Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima Nikāya)*, trans. I. B. Horner, 3 vols., (London: Luzac and Company, 1959) 3:226.

⁶ A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925; reprinted., Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1977) 2:408-9, says that the idea of judgement by Yama is found only later in the *Taittirīya Aranyaka*.

⁷ That is, the *devas*, chief occupants of the heavens, beam their shining rays upon them.

⁸ Keith, *Religion of the Veda*; 2:407.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:405.

¹¹ For ritual life in the cult of the dead in Vedic literature, see Keith, *ibid.*, 2:425-32.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2:425-6.

¹³ For an elaboration and pertinent textual citations, see Knipe, “*Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*”, p. 113; see also S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead: The Idea of Life After Death in the Major Religions* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967), pp. 168-71, and Frederick H. Holck, *Death and Eastern Thought: Understanding Death in Eastern Religions and Philosophies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), pp. 41-48.

¹⁴ Knipe *Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*, pp. 117-20, notes that the three-fold heavenly hierarchy, according to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.6.1. 1-3, was ranked in correspondence to the types of substances that ancestors offered as sacrificial offerings to the *devas* while among the living, and that this division of the fathers’ world is prefigured in *Rg Veda* 10.15.1. Griffith, *Rg Veda* 2:400, n. 1., mistakenly attributes the hierarchy to “merit”.

¹⁵ In addition to Knipe’s *Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*, see Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, *The Rites of the Twice-Born* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920 reprint ed. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1971), pp. 156-92.

¹⁶ *Atharva-Veda* 1:206 (4.34.4.)

¹⁷ See Knipe for further details, *Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*, pp. 115-16.

¹⁸ Knipe notes that the number eleven indicates the identification of the *mahāpātra* priests, who symbolize the *preta* and his ancestors, with the eleven Rudras, symbols of the second of three classes of *pitaras*. See Knipe, *Sap̥iṇḍikarāna*, p. 117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-22.

²⁰ Indeed, the entire period following death until *sap̥iṇḍikarāna* is one of extreme pollution. This could be the reason why the period during which *śrāddha* was observed was condensed from one year to twelve days (*ibid.*, pp. 116-17). The liminal status of the *preta* during this time recalls Mary Douglas’s thesis that liminality connotes danger because an entity is between classification thereby defying ritual techniques to maintain order. See Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966). It also helps to explain why the *mahāpātras*, who symbolize

the *preta* and his ancestors, are held in such low social esteem, by virtue of their association with death.

²¹ E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Strassburg: Verlag Von Karl F. Trübner, 1915; reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), pp. 29-31. Hopkins notes that in the epics, the *pitaras* are worshipped not only by men, but by the *devas*. By now, *pretas* are being described as ghastly and tortured beings. Their association with pollution is also clear: until they are transformed into *pitaras*, they are treated "like outcastes". Unlike *pitaras* who are consistently identified with specific ancestors, *pretas*, again perhaps because of their liminality, are rarely identified with deceased individuals. When they appear in epic literature, it is usually as a host of troops in battle.

²² Keith, *Religion of the Veda*, 2:412-13, argues that the term *preta* is unknown in *Rg Veda* literature proper and its insertion as a liminal phase contradicts the *Rg Veda* understanding that the deceased immediately joins the *pitaras*. But Monier-Williams notes that *preta* is derived from *prē* (the prefix "pra" meaning "forth" and the root \sqrt{i} meaning "to go") and is found in its intensive form *preyate* in a hymn to the Goddess of Dawn, Uṣas, who makes the dark "depart" (*Rg Veda* 7.77.). It is then used in the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads* and the *Laws of Manu* as "to die". The actual term *preta* seems to have been first used, according to Monier-Williams, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* before its widespread employment in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gṛhya Sūtras*, see Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *preta*, p. 711. C. A. F. Rhys Davids erroneously speculated that the term *preta* was a corruption of *pitṛ*, *Indian Religion and its Survival* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1935), p. 35.

²³ Barua's argument is somewhat strained. It is based upon the appearance of the term *aṣṭakā* (denoting memorial services for the dead held three or four times a year) in both the *Vinaya Mahāvagga* and the *Udāna* (references that I checked and was unable to locate and confirm). Barua claims that Buddhagoṣa and Dharmapala both misunderstood the technical sense of the term, and thus did not comprehend its meaning as referring to a ceremony in which oblations were offered to the dead. He says that Pāli references to *aṣṭakā* when correctly understood, are "historically important as proving beyond doubt that even during the life-time of the Buddha the annual bathing in the holy waters of Gayā tank and river was connected with the special funeral ceremonies called *aṣṭakās*, the last round of which comprised the eight days between Māgha and Phalguna. In other words, Gayā was, even at that early period of existence, a holy region for the performance of funeral obsequies and the offering of *piṇḍas*". Benimadhab Barua, *Gayā and Buddha Gayā*, 2 vols. (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishing House, 1932), 1:244.

²⁴ Knipe, *Sapiṇḍikarāṇa*, pp. 121-22.

²⁵ Keith, *Religion of the Veda*, 2:414-15, speculates that the origins of *pretas*, and hence Buddhist Pāli *petas*, may be due to a transmutation of tree and water spirits. This guess is not entirely without justification; for in the *Petavatthu*, sometimes *petas* are addressed as *yakkhas*; further, in modern *Sri Lankā*, *petas* are frequently and confusingly associated with the same. See Richard Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 160-7.

²⁶ See for instance, *The Book of Discipline (Vinayaṭṭhaka)*, ed. and trans. I. B. Horner, 5 vols., (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1938), 1:2.

²⁷ See the "Sigālovāda Suttānta", *Dialogues of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikaya)*, eds. and trans., T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, 3 vols. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1921), 3:180-81.

²⁸ Horner, "Introduction", *Vinayaṭṭhaka*, 1:lviii-iii.

²⁹ Louis de la Vallée Poussin puts their life span at 500 years, a day being equal to a human month. He bases this upon *Katthavatthu* 20.3, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "peta", Vol. IV, p. 134.

³⁰ Above the human realm is *devaloka*, the highest of the five realms in conditioned existence. And above conditioned existence are *rupaloka* (the realms of form) and *arupaloka* (the realm beyond or without form). The five tiers of *kāmaloka* (conditioned existence) are referred to in *Majjhima Nikāya* 1:98 and 289, and in *The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikāya)*, ed. and trans. E. M. Hare, 5 vols. (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1936), 5:266 and 377.

³¹ *Vinayaṭṭhaka* 1:202, 315, 332, 337; 2:201, 206, 360; 3:174, 196, 360, 364.

³² A *dukkāṭa* (wrong doing) offense occurs when one merely touches a *peta* (*Vinayaṭṭhaka* 1:41 and 3:16) or walks with a *peta*, *Vinayaṭṭhaka* 3:20). Incongruously, monks are forbidden to have sexual intercourse with *petas* (*Vinayaṭṭhaka* 1:57), play pranks on them (*Vinayaṭṭhaka* 1:132), or steal from them (*Vinayaṭṭhaka* 1:97).

³³ *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:152.

³⁴ *The Mahāvastu*, trans. J. J. Jones, 3 vols. (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1949) 1:22-24.

³⁵ *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:169.

³⁶ *The Book of Kindred Sayings (Samyutta Nikāya)*, ed. and trans. F. L. Woodward, 5 vols., (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1922), 2:46. *Pañcasīla* refers to abstaining from killing, lying, stealing, sexual impropriety, and the taking of intoxicants.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁸ *Anguttara Nikāya* 1:121-25. Here, an "abuser" is questioned by Yama as to whether he is aware of the story of the "four signs" in which the Buddha identified continuing sickness, old age and death as the consequences of life lived without morality observed.

³⁹ *Dīgha Nikāya* 1:309-10; the entire *sutta* is a critical Buddhist lampoon directed at various Brāhmaṇical practices including the performance of rites and the study of the three *Vedas*.

⁴⁰ *Samyutta Nikāya* 4:218-220.

⁴¹ *The Mahāvamsa*, trans. Wilhelm Geiger (London: Luzac and Company for the Pāli Text Society, 1912), pp. 95-96.

⁴² Henry Gehman, "Introduction", *The Petavatthu*, in *Minor Anthologies of the Pāli Canon*, ed. I. B. Horner, Part IV (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1942), p. xi.

⁴³ *Petavatthu*, pp. 6-7, 7-11, 14-16, 23-26, 38, and 38-41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7, 7-11, 11-13, 16-18, 19-21, 27-29, 29-32, 32-35, 36-37, 41-43, 44-45, 54-56, 69-72, 77-78, 93-97, 98-99, 99-100, and 105-107.

⁴⁵ In all but two stories (*ibid.*, pp. 3-4 and 4-5) where the protagonist is a *bhikkhu*.

⁴⁶ For example, a laywoman in one story (*ibid.*, 11-13) conspires against another woman to make sure that she does not bear children. She is reborn in *petaloka* where every morning she gives birth to five children and every evening must devour them. In another story (pp. 4-5), a man consistently slandering others is reborn in *petaloka* with a mouth full of worms. In yet another (pp. 29-32), a woman (Sariputta's mother), reviled *bhikkhus* saying, "Eat dung, drink urine, drink blood, eat the brain of your mother". The story continues: "Taken up at death by the power of *karma*, she was reborn as a *peti* who endured misery in conformity with her misbehavior". A lurid description follows.

⁴⁷ The pattern here is that if the story is to include merit transfer, the *peta* almost always appears to surviving kin. If merit transfer is not included in the story, the *peta* usually appears to a *bhikkhu* who then purportedly tells the Buddha of his encounter with the *peta*.

⁴⁸ All stories excepting those indicated in note 44 above, and five others (*ibid.*, pp. 7-11, 14-16, 23-26, 38-41, and 63-66), some of which are also found in the *Jātakas* and in the *Vimānavatthu*.

⁴⁹ In Pāli literature, the *devas* are greatly reduced in importance in comparison to their Brāhmanical role. They must be reborn as human beings if they are to enter upon the *bhikkhu* path to *nibbāna*. The *deva* status is, therefore, not a final goal to be attained, but only the favorable result of virtuous deeds performed while living the lay religious life as a human.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁵¹ As we noted, the deceased as *petas* are in special need because of their suffering and powerless plight. There is no indication in Pāli literature of surviving kinsmen transferring merit to those assumed to have attained heavenly status. Further, those reborn in hell or the animal abode seem to be beyond help.

⁵² Maurice Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 2 vols., (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927; reprint ed., New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977), 2:98-99.

⁵³ In the *Petavatthu*, it surfaces no less than sixteen times (pp. 11-13, 13-14, 27-29, 32-35, 36-37, 41-43, 54-56, 58-63, 77-78, 79-80, 80-81, 81-83, 101-102, 103, 103-104, and 109-110).

⁵⁴ *Anguttara Nikāya* 3:294.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the philosophical and soteriological importance attached to *vinñāṇa*, see Donald Swearer, "Two types of saving knowledge in the Pāli suttas", *Philosophy East and West*, 22 (October, 1972): 355-71.

⁵⁶ See for instance, Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religion*, ed. and trans. with an Introduction by Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 93-96, and S. G. F. Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962).

⁵⁷ G. P. Malalasekera, "'Transference of Merit' in Ceylonese Buddhism", *Philosophy East and West*, 17 (January, 1967): 85-90.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Knipe, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, p. 121.

⁶² Malalasekera, "Transference of Merit", pp. 85-86.

⁶³ Cited in Richard Gombrich's "'Merit Transference' in Sinhalese Buddhism: A Case Study of the Interaction Between Doctrine and Behavior", *History of Religions*, 11 (November, 1971): 206-207. This article corresponds almost verbatim to pp. 227-41 of *Precept and Practice*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Winternitz assigns the *Petavatthu* correctly to the latest strata of literature assembled in the canon, Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 2:99. He notes that even Dharmapala, in his commentary, believed that there was a substantial interval between the text and the life of the Buddha, despite the fact that all but eleven of the stories begin with the stock phrase, "When the teacher was dwelling at....., he told this story". In any case, the patterns with which we are dealing are, according to Gombrich, at least 2000 years old. Gombrich, "Merit Transference", p. 218.

⁶⁶ "The Story of the Petas Outside the Walls", *Petavatthu*, p. 11.

⁶⁷ For a detailed analysis, see V. P. Varma, "The Origins and Sociology of the Early Buddhist Philosophy of Moral Determinism", *Philosophy East and West* 13 (April, 1963): 25-48.

⁶⁸ In this connection, it is important to note that *pāṇimokkha* and *pavāraṇā* rituals, which express the collectively pure status of the *Saṅgha* in relation to the Vinaya rules, are held immediately before merit-making activities of the laity such as *uposatha* and *kathina*. See my "Ritual Expression in the *Vinayaṭīkā*: A Prolegomenon", *History of Religions* 18 (August, 1978): 42-53.

⁶⁹ In the soteriological sense, the *Saṅgha* might be regarded as the new "extended" family. I owe this suggestive insight to Professor John Strong, private communication.

⁷⁰ Knipe, *Sapīṇḍikarāṇa*, p. 115.

⁷¹ S. J. Tambiah, for instance, in his *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 65, writes "Buddhism is dramatically anti-brahmanical in enjoining contemplation of and contact with death as a major preoccupation of the monk. The accent is on visiting graveyards, confrontation with death and corpses, meditation on death to understand the transitoriness of life. The wearing of the *pamsakulīna* rags gathered from graveyards is an extreme gesture of this absorption with death".

⁷² I. B. Horner, *Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1936), pp. 282-312.

⁷³ *Petavatthu*, pp. 1-3, 6-7, 7-11, 11-13, 16-18, 19-21, 27-29, 29-32, 32-35, 36-37, 41-43, 44-45, 54-56, 69-72, 75-76, 77-78, 84-93, 93, 93-97, 97, 98-99, 99-100, 105-107, 107 (the last two stories praising the virtue of giving gifts in general).

⁷⁴ Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, Introduction to *Classical Indian Mythology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), pp. 10 and 248-49.

⁷⁵ For detailed studies of this pilgrimage rite, see Barua, *Gayā and Buddha Gayā*, and L. P. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gayā*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1978), especially pp. 30-49 and 114-50.

INTERPRETATION: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND SOME APPLICATIONS

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Our primary concern in this paper is with the interpretation of what people say on the basis of what they utter. We wish to show how an understanding of the workings of language as they bear on the theory of interpretation can help one to understand religious, and in particular Biblical, texts, unmasking certain confusions and indicating questions which tend to be overlooked. We shall first introduce a number of basic terms, concepts and distinctions, followed by some tentative suggestions towards a theory of the sense of linguistic expressions. The perspective thus gained will then be used to draw attention to the importance of a) linguistic and conceptual change and b) appreciating that to understand a belief and its linguistic expression requires a grasp of an entire network of beliefs and expressions. In discussing both these matters we aim to show that an awareness of the nature of interpretation may prove a fruitful source of insights into the understanding of Biblical texts. The danger of such an enterprise is that it might lead one to be deflected from the hard practical task of interpretation to a preoccupation with theory for its own sake. In the area of Biblical studies a justification may be sought in the fact that interpretations have been and continue to be influenced by a variety of philosophical and theological theories and yet the fundamental issues have not been formulated with sufficient clarity to make critical appraisal possible.

I

Let us begin then with a look at some basic terms, concepts and distinctions.

Since what we have to say applies to both speech and writing it is convenient to employ a single term to cover particular uses of language by particular speakers in each of these modes. For this purpose we shall extend the ordinary use of the term "utterance" so that it covers any act of saying something either in speech or writing. Utterances in this strict sense are particular events or

sequences of events consisting in the production of a particular sequence of sounds or inscriptions. The problems of interpretation with which this paper is concerned do not require us to analyse the mechanisms and techniques of speech and writing. We are interested not in utterances as such but in the meanings of the sounds and inscriptions which they produce. We may therefore modify the strict sense of the term “utterance” and apply it to the sequences of sounds and inscriptions which are produced by utterances in the strict sense. We shall use the term in both the modified and the strict sense leaving it to the context to indicate which sense is intended.

Whereas utterances are particulars, the linguistic forms which they employ, sentences, terms and other sorts of expression, are repeatable types which may be used by different people at different times.

Utterances are, by and large, intentional, though this should not be taken to entail that they are made only after deliberation or reflection on their aims. In the very broadest sense, *what an utterance means* is just what the speaker intended in making it. A speaker’s intention is, more often than not, complex and could include, besides the intention to say something, the intention to give vent to an emotion or to persuade or otherwise affect those who might be addressed. Here it is of paramount importance to distinguish between *what is said* by means of an utterance and its *function for the speaker*,¹ that is, what the speaker aims to do in and through making it. When uttering something a speaker will usually aim to say something but that he has this aim is one thing, what he actually says is another, even when he says what he aims to say. (We might know the first without knowing the second and *vice versa*.) Besides, as already suggested, utterances also have other functions, for example, insulting, persuading, provoking, revealing emotions, inducing emotions, attacking, defending, explaining, obscuring, inciting, calming, performing a ritual, commanding, commending and many others. We might have to know what is said by an utterance in order fully to understand its functions, or even to be able to guess what they are. Equally, a knowledge of the function of an utterance, in a ritual context say, might serve as a guide to what is said by its means.

Though the distinction between function and what is said seems an obvious one, its importance for the practical business of interpretation is often overlooked. In the euphoria which followed the dissemination of Wittgenstein's ideas, philosophers of religion made great play with the idea that language has a variety of uses besides that of asserting purported truths (propositions). Attempts were made to show that sentences which, on the face of it, are used to assert propositions with a theological subject matter, in fact are not used to assert propositions at all but have a quite different use. One suggestion was that such sentences are used to express fundamental perspectives which are themselves neither true nor false, nor empirically decidable, but which condition the practical and theoretical responses to the world of those who have them (R. M. Hare).² Another suggestion was that they announce intentions to conform to practical policies (R. B. Braithwaite).³ Whatever the merits or demerits of these suggestions they leave untouched the theoretical problem of how to explicate the concept of what is said by an utterance and do not illumine the practical problem of how to determine what is said by the use of language in theological discourse. Someone who says "God created heaven and earth" might be expressing an optimistic attitude to the world but we would not usually be able to determine that unless we could determine the sense of the sentence uttered. Similarly, even if someone who says "God is love" were announcing an intention to lead an "agapeistic" way of life, (though this, as a general account, seems implausible), this would not provide us with the explanation of the sense of the sentence uttered which would normally be required in order to determine that the utterance had this function. We do not suggest that either Hare or Braithwaite thought otherwise. Braithwaite explicitly recognises the need for an account of the content of sentences used in religious discourse in order to discriminate between different religious traditions. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that we shall reach an adequate view of the distinctive features of religious discourse, or of its functions in various contexts, or of the relations between function and content, without directly tackling the concept of what is said by an utterance.

The same tendency to emphasise function at the expense of content can be observed among Biblical scholars. Bultmann, in

the introduction to his *Jesus*,⁴ says of Jesus' teaching that it must be "understood in the light of the concrete situation of a man living in time as his interpretation of his own existence in the midst of change" The words of Jesus, he says, "meet us with the question of how we are to interpret our own existence" (p. 16). Bultmann invites us to look at the function of Jesus' teaching as an expression of his own self-understanding and as a challenge to those who are addressed by it. This in itself is, perhaps, sound advice, but Bultmann also tells us not to treat Jesus' teaching as a "system of thought" or as a "philosophical system". If this means that Jesus' sayings are not to be construed as fragments of a systematic treatise or as the fruits of systematic enquiry and argument then it is unexceptionable. If, on the other hand, as sometimes appears, it means that the content of Jesus' teaching is in a sense inessential to its meaning, being merely the vehicle or instrument for the performance of the functions just noted,⁵ then it is at best misleading. Function and content though distinct are not separable in this way. A similar concern with the function of religious utterances can be seen in a recent work by N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*.⁶ Perrin dismisses talk of Jesus' "conception of the Kingdom of God" as imprecise, and suggests that we speak of the Kingdom as a "symbol" which is used by Jesus to *evoke* the myth of God acting in the world as King and to *mediate* the experience of God as King. There is an important point being made here similar to that which we have found in Bultmann viz. that the sayings of Jesus cannot be adequately understood without attending to their *force*, that is, their intended effects upon those addressed. They were not merely making statements, they were challenging and provoking. Yet even if we allow that they call to mind an ancient myth we still need to explain the myth showing what someone who told the myth would be saying. Perrin remarks (p. 56) that Jesus' sayings "resist translation into another mode of discourse" and this, as much as his emphasis on function, explains his curious reluctance to explore the world-view behind the language of the Kingdom. There is a point worth making here, but it requires further clarification and should not obscure the fact that we cannot grasp the force, nor any other aspect of the function of Jesus' utterances, without some grasp of the content of the "myth".

II

Let us then focus on this idea of content with the help of the concept of what is said by an utterance. What is said by an utterance of a sentence is *the sense of the sentence uttered in the particular context of utterance*. As such the concept of what is said needs to be distinguished from the sense which the speaker intends to convey by means of his utterance, which we shall call "*the sense of the utterance*". The distinction is illustrated by slips of the tongue. Someone who says "Pass the pepper" and means "Pass the salt" intends to convey the sense of the latter sentence but actually conveys the sense of the former. It is the sense of the former which determines what he says. This is a case where a speaker unwittingly fails to convey the sense which he intends. Sometimes a speaker deliberately conveys a sense other than that which determines what he says. For example, if one has just laid out a concrete bed for a greenhouse and one's neighbour steps on it one might be forgiven for saying, sarcastically, "That was a great help". What one actually says is given by the sense of the sentence uttered, but what one intends to convey, the sense of the utterance, is to the effect that one's neighbour's carelessness was no help at all. When interpreting texts in relation to which relatively little in the way of background information is available one has, for the most part, no choice but to assume that the sense of the utterances which they contain coincides with what is said by their means. This means that for our present purposes the key concept is that of the sense of a sentence in a particular context of utterance.

It would be widely agreed that the sense of an expression is related in some way to its being used in accordance with conventions and indeed that its standard or commonly accepted sense is entirely determined by conventions governing use. However, the nature of convention itself and the particular form of the conventions which govern the sense of expressions are matters of dispute. The perspective to be sketched here seems to us to be both theoretically promising and practically useful though it requires more argument and more detailed working out than we shall provide.

Intuitively it is obvious that linguistic expressions can be linked with one another in ways which depend upon their sense. To take

very simple examples: “red” is thus linked with “coloured”, “courage” with “bravery”, “tiger” with “animal”. The relation between the elements in each of these pairs is, roughly, that in order to understand the first, as it is used by competent speakers of English, you have to understand the second. To put it another way, the sense of the first depends upon the sense of the second. Many expressions are such that their sense depends upon that of a wide range of others. In English the word “chapel” is used of a place of Christian worship other than a parish church or cathedral. A reliable use⁷ of the term requires that you understand, among others, the expressions “Christian”, “worship”, “parish”, “church”, and “cathedral”. In turn each of these expressions is linked with others. To understand “Christian”, for instance, you have to understand “one who follows Christ”. The sense of a term thus depends upon a more or less complex branching system of links with other terms. But terms are not only linked with other terms. They may also be linked with sensory experience. What constitutes the link in the simplest cases is the fact that the term in question would not normally be applied to a present object at a particular time unless one had, or believed that one could readily bring it about that one had, an experience or series of experiences of a specified type. One would not normally say, for example, “That is an oak tree” pointing to a nearby object at a particular place unless one had, or could readily obtain, an experience as of an oak tree at that place. We need not debate here whether all meaningful terms must have an experiential dimension to their sense, or whether any terms have a purely experiential sense, their sense being exhausted by their links with experience, though these are questions which would naturally arise in any development of these views.

We have then a rough and ready idea of how the sense of a term depends upon its links with other terms and/or sensory experience. *The central task of the theory of sense is to give an account of the nature of these links.* The two central elements in the perspective upon which we shall rely are A. that the term-to-term and term-to-experience links are constituted by regularities in linguistic use and B. that linguistic communication among the members of a community is only possible because the regularities which operate in that community are, for the most part, conventional.

A. The regularities which seem to us to be fundamental are those governing the acceptance and rejection of declarative sentences. We shall first explain the notions of acceptance and rejection and then indicate the general form of some simple types of regularity. Acceptance and rejection are relations which hold between persons and declarative sentences in particular natural languages at particular times. Acceptance is the relation which we have to a declarative sentence *S* when there is some proposition which we take *S* to express and which we hold to be true. Rejection is the relation which we have to a declarative sentence *S* when there is some proposition which we take *S* to express and which we hold to be false.⁸ Though related, respectively to belief and disbelief, acceptance and rejection are not identical with these propositional attitudes. We might know that a person believes or disbelieves the proposition that *p* without knowing which sentences he accepts, if, for example, he speaks Chinese and our only acquaintance with what he believes is through a translation. Conversely one might know that a person accepts or rejects a sentence *S* in some natural language without knowing what proposition he intends *S* to express nor, what amounts to the same thing, what sense he assigns to *S*.⁹ At theological conferences, for example, one is sometimes at a loss as to how to interpret the sentences which a speaker utters although one is in no doubt that the speaker accepts those which he utters. It is this last point which makes acceptance and rejection important in the theory of sense. Since our aim is to give an account of sense in terms of regularities in language use we must have a way of describing the regularities which does not presuppose assignments of sense to particular sentences. This is what the concepts of acceptance and rejection enable us to do. Though our exposition of these concepts relies on the problematic concept of the expression of a proposition which requires further analysis in terms of the theory of sense, nevertheless it is possible to apply these concepts in particular cases without knowing the sense of the sentences involved. The best evidence for such applications lies in the unprompted utterances of a speaker and in his dispositions to assent to and dissent from sentences proffered by the interpreter. The problem for the interpreter is to work out from the pattern of acceptance and rejection which emerges from a speaker's use of language and from plausible

assumptions about what he believes and desires, the sense which he assigns to his utterances. Obviously the scope for checking interpretations is much reduced where there is little or no information about what the speaker/writer believes and desires, and about the peculiarities of his use of language, beyond the utterances contained in a written text or series of texts.

Our suggestion, then, is that the linguistic regularities which count are those governing acceptance and rejection. We turn now to a brief consideration of the form of those regularities. As we saw above the sense of the English word "chapel" depends on that of a number of other expressions. This dependence amounts to such facts as the following: a competent speaker who utters, and is taken to accept, some substitution instance of "—is a chapel" would normally, and quite reasonably, be taken to accept certain other sentences, such as the corresponding instance of "—is a place of Christian worship". An audience's grasp of the sense of the instance of "—is a chapel" in part consists of their knowledge of what other sentences the speaker would accept granted that he accepts *that* sentence. It is equally part of the audience's grasp of the sense of the sentence that they know that the speaker would reject it if he were to reject the corresponding instance of "—is a place of Christian worship". The regularities which lie behind the audience's expectations are thus of the following form:

- a) Any speaker who accepts an instance of "—is a chapel" would also accept the corresponding instance of "—is a place of Christian worship".
- b) Any speaker who rejects an instance of "—is a place of Christian worship" would also reject the corresponding instance of "—is a chapel".

Regularities similar to a) would connect an instance of "—is a place of Christian worship" with sentences which would also be accepted if it is accepted. The original sentence, the instance of "—is a chapel", would therefore be connected by a series of links to a series of other sentences the acceptance of which is a necessary condition for *its* acceptance. A grasp of the standard sense of a sentence consists in a knowledge of such links. Of course, not all regularities of acceptance and rejection are of this simple kind. We have already

seen the need to take account of links between linguistic expressions and types of sensory experience. Many other refinements need to be introduced. But the intuitive idea which should guide a more detailed treatment is this: to grasp the sense of a declarative sentence *S* is to know firstly, what someone who accepts *S* is committed to, in the way of accepting or rejecting other sentences and in the way of anticipating experiences, and secondly, what in the way of accepting or rejecting other sentences and in the way of anticipating experiences, commits one to rejecting *S*. We must now turn to the second central element in the present perspective.

B. Linguistic communication among people in a community is possible only because the regularities of acceptance and rejection to which they conform are *conventional*¹⁰ in that community. To say that the regularities are conventional is to say that at least the following conditions must hold of them: (1) Everyone conforms to them. (2) Everyone believes that everyone else conforms to them. (3) This belief generates a good reason for each person to conform himself. (In each case one could add "for the most part" or "a significant amount of the time" to "conforms".) Unless (1)-(3) hold there is no basis for people's expectations concerning the links associated with a given sentence by others, and thus no basis for understanding others or expecting to be understood. Condition (3) is particularly important in this connection. The belief that everyone else conforms to a regularity generates a good reason to conform oneself so long as one has an interest in the ends which the existence of the regularity promotes. In the case of regularities in language use the end is communication. Consequently anyone who has an interest in communicating by means of language, and who knows that a particular regularity *R* is conformed to by everyone else, has a good reason to conform to *R* himself. This means that, subject to certain qualifications, to use language in a way which conflicts with *R* is to make a mistake or to deliberately mislead, and in either case to be open to rational criticism of one sort or another. Regularities as such do not yield rational requirements. Conventional regularities do, in virtue of condition (3).

The qualifications which need to be made here have a bearing on the application of the present perspective to the interpretation of discourse in religious contexts. Language is not only an instrument

of communication, it is also a vehicle of truth. The two functions are essentially connected. Our articulations of what we take to be true must be intelligible, and that means communicable, so that the requirements for successful communication will yield requirements on the intelligibility of attempts to articulate the truth. Still, it is worth distinguishing them since they can be at odds with one another. The tension is made possible by the fact that attempts to articulate the truth sometimes lead to deviations from established regularities of language use. Creative innovations are to be found not only in discourse of an overtly poetic intent, but also in science, politics and, of course, religion. They will be discussed further below as they occur in the latter context. The point to be stressed here is that the possibility of linguistic innovation imposes certain constraints on the interpretation of condition (3). Though belief in the existence of a regularity R meeting condition (2) generates a good reason to conform to R oneself, that reason can be overridden even when one has an interest in the end which R promotes. It follows that a use of language which conflicts with R is not necessarily either a mistake or deliberately misleading. It may promote, among other aims, a more adequate articulation of the truth. The end of communication is not thereby flouted. Although each regularity in a community promotes communication it does not follow that conformity to each regularity by everyone in the community is absolutely essential to communication. So long as there remains enough uniformity in linguistic practice to enable deviations to be explained, communication can proceed though it may be strained.

In expounding the central themes A and B we have moved from talk of terms to talk of sentences. The reason is that the conventional associations of a term depend upon the conventional associations of sentences into which the term enters, that is to say, upon the conventional links which sentences containing the term have with other sentences and with experience. Once we know the conventions which govern the acceptance and rejection of declarative sentences there is no separate problem about the sense of terms.

Now, before we embarked upon this discussion of conventions in the theory of sense we had reached the conclusion that the key concept in the theory of interpretation is that of the sense of a sentence

uttered in a particular context of utterance. This, we suggested, determines what is said by means of an utterance. We are now in a position to appreciate that the sense of a sentence in a particular context of utterance may be only indirectly related to its standard conventionally determined sense. In order to grasp the sense of a sentence in a particular context of utterance we need to know (i) what conventions govern the acceptance and rejection of the sentence and (ii) to what extent the speaker/writer is using the sentence in accordance with the conventions. (We hope elsewhere to explore in some detail the relation between sense and standard sense.) (ii) is particularly important in view of the possibility of linguistic innovation. Often the impact of a spoken or written discourse derives from the fact that what the author says involves a challenge to accepted conventions, and thus to accepted concepts.¹¹ Here we come to the first of the two applications of the suggested perspective indicated at the beginning of this paper viz. that concerning the importance of linguistic and conceptual change.

III

Concepts are modified through a change in the network of associations determining the sense of the terms which can be used to express them. A topical example will serve to illustrate how the conventional associations of terms may be challenged. Movements like the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa are faced with a problem of what terms to use in order to speak about members of the "non-European", "non-white" South African community, whose self-consciousness, self-esteem and self-confidence they wish to raise. The difficulty arises simply from the fact that all available terms have conventional associations which are in one way or another negative and humiliating: "black", "kaffir", "negro", "bantu". What they have done is choose the term "black" which has an acceptable *core sense* relating to skin pigmentation while rejecting certain of its conventional associations, such as "lazy", "cheeky", "ugly", "servile" etc., by affirming and acting out their contraries. Thus "Black is beautiful" as a slogan clearly challenges one of the conventional associations of "black", replacing it by its contrary. Equally, the relaxed, self-confident and humorous conduct of Steve Biko at the trial of the

nine activists of the Black People's Convention and the South African Students Organisation provided a living challenge to the associations with which the term is linked by the majority of the white South African population, as well as suggesting others. Similarly modes of dress, hairstyles etc., which emphasise blackness and other physical characteristics, rework the term's associations.¹²

Two points about this example are worth noting. Firstly, the evaluatively negative force of utterances of sentences which predicate "black" of people derives from the negative attitude to those who instantiate the concepts expressed by the terms conventionally associated with "black". On the other hand, the positive force of "Black is beautiful" derives from positive attitudes to those who instantiate the concept of the beautiful. The way in which an evaluatively loaded term contributes to the force of certain types of utterance can help as well as hinder linguistic and conceptual innovation. Secondly, the example raises problems about the complex interplay between beliefs and conventions. One might be inclined to suggest that even among the white community it is not in virtue of the *sense* of "black" that whoever is black is thought to be lazy or cheeky or whatever. This is just a belief which many whites actually have about those who are black. Is then the link between "black" and "lazy" truly conventional relative to the white community? Or is it, as we might say, belief-mediated? In fact, put in this way the alternatives are not exclusive. To claim that there is a conventional link is not to deny that people *believe* that blacks are lazy, though it does say something about the nature of the belief. The real point at issue is whether one accounts for the belief in terms of the conventions or in terms of inducements to belief provided by limited experience and hearsay. If there is a truly conventional link between "—is black" and "—is lazy", those who conform to the convention would accept an instance of the latter whenever they accept the corresponding instance of the former for the reason that they believe that everyone else in their linguistic community would. That belief need not be explicitly formulated. In most cases it would not be, since conformity to linguistic uniformities is largely habitual. It would nonetheless be reflected in the fact that members of the community neither seek, nor see the need for,

justification for thinking that blacks are lazy, do not see it as open to falsification, and would automatically assume that anyone in the community who said that X is black, or is a black, would also hold, if not necessarily assert, that X is lazy. In this kind of circumstance an evaluative attitude is formed and sustained by common linguistic practice.

An awareness of the mechanisms of linguistic and conceptual change might reasonably be expected to be of some use in appreciating the patterns of thought and action to which portions of Biblical literature bear witness. If the coming of God's Kingdom is conceptually connected with God's acting to destroy his enemies, (i.e. if sentences pertaining to God's destruction of his enemies are conventional associations of sentences pertaining to the coming of God's Kingdom), then anyone who wished to proclaim that God's sovereignty is made effective through his love, while employing the concept of God's Kingdom, would have to modify the concept by changing the conventions governing the expressions which articulate it. This indeed appears to be what Jesus did. He retained the core sense of the expression but rejected some of its associations and added others. To cite Dodd: the "common underlying idea is that of God's sovereign power becoming manifestly effective in the world of human experience. When it pleases God to 'reveal' or 'set up' His kingly rule, then there will be judgment on all the wrong that is in the world, victory over all the powers of evil, and for those who have accepted His sovereignty, deliverance and a blessed life in communion with Him".¹³ What is distinctive about Jesus' use of the expression is not simply that he says that God's Kingdom has *already* come,¹⁴ but that he proclaims the Kingdom in the context of his healing, exorcising ministry and his meals with sinners and collaborators. The point is this. For Jesus' contemporaries, e.g. the Zealots and the Essenes, sentences pertaining to God's victory over evil were conventionally linked with sentences pertaining to the destruction and punishment of His enemies. Jesus, by associating publicly with sinners and collaborators at the same time as proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom, in effect challenged that link. Simplifying, one might say that Jesus rejected those conventional associations of the term "Kingdom of God" relating to destruction,

punishment of enemies and sinners and replaced them with others relating to forgiveness, healing and restoration.

But, if Jesus' use of the concept involves such a re-working of the conventions governing the expressions which articulate it, why did he bother? In the first place, to communicate at all the religious innovator has to employ expressions which are available in his own language despite the fact that they may have features which work against what he has to say. Secondly, such terms may, as a result of their role within a tradition, and their consequent associations with the community's hopes and aspirations, have acquired a powerful affective charge. It may be worth risking misunderstanding through a fairly radical shift in sense, if the key terms one uses do indeed *evoke* the community's hopes; but in so doing, by virtue of the fact that what is being *said* is different, these hopes are themselves being redirected.

The misunderstanding of Jesus' actions and sayings is a central theme of Mark's Gospel. The predictions of the suffering of the Son of Man in chs. 8.31-9.1, 9.30-37, 10.32-45, provide interesting illustrations of misunderstandings which are due to linguistic and conceptual innovation. Each passage has Jesus predicting the suffering of the Son of Man, his rejection, death and resurrection, followed by reactions by one or more of the disciples which indicate that they misunderstand what Jesus has said, and then, finally, a discourse by Jesus on the cost of discipleship. The discourses on discipleship provide clues to how, within Mark's narrative, the disciples' misunderstanding of the predictions should be interpreted. They are united by the way in which they highlight one or more paradoxical contrasts, for example, between saving one's life and losing it (8.35), being first and being last (9.35, 10.44), receiving the great and receiving children (9.36-37), being served and serving (9.35, 10.43), being master and being slave (10.42-44). In each of these contrasts it is the second (though sometimes with a shift in sense) which characterises the life of the disciple as, broadly speaking, a life of suffering. What, apparently, makes this relevant to the disciples' misunderstanding is that the form of the disciple's life is taken to be analogous to that of the Son of Man. At 8.34 the disciple is required to take up his cross in analogy with Jesus' death. At 9.37 he is to receive children as Jesus did. At 10.38-39 he is to

drink the cup which Jesus will drink and be baptised. The disciples appear to be represented by Mark as having been puzzled at how the life of the *Son of Man* could exhibit the form of suffering. This suggests that Mark wants his readers to think of the disciples as having been misled by the conventional association of *ho huios tou anthrōpou* with concepts of glory (8.38), power (9.1) and greatness (9.34, 10.42ff.), which exclude the possibility that the one to whom the title applies should suffer. Alternatively, even if it is not the expression *ho huios tou anthrōpou* which causes the problem the disciples are clearly represented as having understood Jesus, and their own prospects through association with him (10.35-37), in terms of concepts of glory, power and greatness far removed from the concept of discipleship at work in the discourses. Yet the expressions for glory, power and greatness still apply to the life of suffering, indicating that they undergo a shift in sense, and thus articulate new concepts.

It is interesting to note here how a preoccupation with the polemical purpose or function of utterance may lead scholars to overlook the important conceptual changes which are being made in historical texts. Thus T. J. Weeden in *Mark—Traditions in Conflict*¹⁵ rightly notices that there is a sharp contrast between the kind of christology which links the notion of the Son of Man with suffering and that which sees Jesus' nature as being reflected in miraculous and powerful deeds. He also notes quite properly that we learn more of Mark's christology by noting how it is linked with the notion of suffering discipleship (p. 53). What Weeden however misses is the *interchange* between the old notion of power of a christology which is centred on miracle and that now being advanced in the suffering Son of Man christology. Weeden presents these two positions simply as opposite views held by different parties. While it may be true that there were such parties, and indeed that Mark was concerned to combat certain christological errors, the *meaning* of Mark's text is seen more clearly when it is understood that Mark's own christology is the result of a *transformation* of current notions of power. He is not simply advocating suffering and powerlessness as opposed to doing miracles of power; what he is urging is that God's power is exercised and manifested in suffering and service.

IV

A fundamental feature of the approach to interpretation outlined in this paper is that to understand a sentence you have to understand a more or less complex *network* of sentences held together by conventional links and related to experience by conventional links. In virtue of the relation between beliefs and their linguistic expression it follows that to identify the belief which is expressed by a declarative sentence is to identify a wide network of beliefs and experiences. The image of the network¹⁶ is important because it suggests to the interpreter the need to search for ramifications in a system of belief which may not be evident on first inspection. Moreover, systems of belief do not occur in isolation. Theological beliefs, for example, combine with beliefs about ethics, human nature and the physical world to form larger and more complex networks. It is a logical truism that a conjunction of beliefs yields entailments which could not be obtained from the conjuncts on their own. In view of this it is evident that a theological doctrine of a sufficient degree of complexity, within a rich background of non-theological beliefs, might yield conclusions which at first seem quite remote from theology. To take an over simplified example: It is part of the Christian doctrine of creation that God created the world from nothing and that God is good and omnipotent.¹⁷ When these beliefs are conjoined with natural assumptions about goodness and power they entail that the created world is good. What that means, and thus what it entails, will depend upon further assumptions about the nature of goodness. In the theology of Augustine, for example, the belief that the created world is good would be shown on analysis to entail that the world is ordered in certain ways, and this in turn could be spelled out in terms of distinctive concepts of order which have their origin in Plato's philosophy. To appreciate the full significance of a doctrine like that of creation one must, therefore, attend not only to its explicit content (as represented by the sense of the sentences which are used to express it), but also to its role within a wider network of beliefs. To develop and illustrate this point further we shall briefly examine some problems concerning the relation between religious beliefs about God or gods, beliefs about purity, and beliefs about social structure and inter-societal relations.

This will constitute the second of the two applications mentioned at the beginning of the paper.

Nineteenth and twentieth century interpreters of religion have often been puzzled by the importance which some peoples attach to beliefs and practices relating to notions of purity which, taken at their face value, seem erroneous or bizarre. Rationalist interpretations which simply dismiss them as false or misguided, or traditional theological interpretations which see purity regulations as part of ceremonial law—an inessential adjunct to religion proper—fail to do justice to the power which notions of purity can have over individuals and also overlook their role in relation to society as a whole. Among those who have recognised the problem some have sought to explain the vitality and power of beliefs and practices relating to purity by suggesting that the dangers which are attached to things classified as unclean reflect anxieties about the integrity of society, its inner structure and external relations.

A good example of the application of this type of interpretative model to the Biblical field is that provided by Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger*.¹⁸ A discussion of some of the main features of her account, and of the problems which it faces, will serve to highlight its similarities to and differences from our own.

According to Douglas, the purity regulations in Leviticus have to be understood within the context of the “total structure of thought” (p. 54) operating in Israel at the time. The dominant idea associated with purity is that of holiness, conceived not only as separatedness, but also in terms of wholeness, perfection and being true to type. Hence in Israel priests had to be not only free from all pollution but perfectly whole and lacking any physical defect. Furthermore, sexual regulations forbade miscegenation whether with other species or between prohibited classes of people. This concept of holiness provides the key to an interpretation of the dietary regulations in Leviticus 11. The question is: why are such animals as camels, hares and rock badgers unclean while frogs, gazelles and mountain sheep are not? The basic principle according to Douglas is this: “To be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind. The dietary rules merely develop the metaphor of holiness on the same lines” (p. 68). Conformity to kind is particularly important for the dietary

regulations. For instance, animals within the different spheres of earth, air and water are classified as pure or impure depending on whether or not they conform to certain norms which define types appropriate to each sphere. In the terrestrial sphere to part the hoof and chew the cud is taken to be the proper type. Camels, hares and badgers do not meet both of these requirements and so are unclean. This may seem arbitrary but it no doubt reflects the interests and habits of the Jews as a pastoral people (cf. p. 68). Other creatures are classified on similar principles so that all are given a place within an overall scheme. "The dietary laws would have been like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God" (p. 72).

The principles of classification suggested by Douglas do seem to throw light on the place of purity regulations within a wider system of thought. We do not wish to take issue with them. The problems upon which we shall focus arise when Douglas attempts to account for the dangers attached to animals classified as unclean. One obvious possibility, which she in effect rejects, is this: the Israelites believed that God is holy and commanded them to be holy too. They conceived God to be all-knowing and all powerful so that to break the purity regulations, and thus to disobey God, would be to run the risk of being punished. Thus the dangers attached to unclean animals are just the dangers attached to disobeying God. Douglas would presumably find this kind of explanation dissatisfying on the grounds that it makes the implausible assumption that metaphysical, in this case theological, beliefs, *taken at their face value*, can be practically efficacious.¹⁹

The alternative which Douglas suggests is to regard the dangers attached to the impure as a reflection of anxieties concerning possible dangers to society. She explains this in some detail in relation to the dangers attached to bodily emissions. The basic idea is that the body is a symbol of society in such a way that a preoccupation with the boundaries and integrity of the body reflects a preoccupation with the boundaries and integrity of the body politic. Anxieties about society are the sociological counterpart of anxieties about the body. The important features of this model of explanation, which we shall call "the counterpart model", are (1) that it explains a puzzling anxiety in terms of an intelligible one, and (2) that the

anxieties which figure in the *explanans* are powerful enough to motivate behaviour, and in particular, to motivate apparently bizarre ritual activities.

There are a number of serious difficulties in this sort of approach. The first concerns what is meant by saying that the body is a symbol of society. One possibility is that the body is taken to be a symbol of society by a community when the members of the community take the concept of the body to apply metaphorically to society.²⁰ This is what happens within the Christian community when the church is said to be the body of Christ. On this interpretation it would only be reasonable to say of a community that for them the body is a symbol of society when they actually think of society as a body. This is where the first difficulty arises, for it is far from obvious that in the cases to which Douglas applies the counterpart model this condition is met. If one accepts our construal of symbolisation one must either show that the condition is met quite straightforwardly, or that it is met but in such a way that this is revealed only by a deep analysis. If one appealed to unconscious thoughts on the part of the community one would be opting for the latter alternative. In either case one would need to provide more in the way of evidence, and in the latter case, in addition, a further account of the type of analysis which would reveal unconscious thoughts. On the other hand one might reject our construal of symbolisation, but in that case some other interpretation ought to be provided.²¹

Even if this difficulty could be met there is another which affects the application of the counterpart model to anxieties relating to purity. One of the main advantages that seemed to attach to the model was that it explained puzzling anxieties in terms of intelligible anxieties. This suggests a condition which must be met by any anxieties about society which figure in the *explanans* of a counterpart explanation of anxieties relating to the impure: they must be intelligible independently of these concepts of purity and impurity which inform the anxieties to be explained. This condition does not seem to be met in one of the central cases which Mary Douglas considers. The Coorgs of Southern India have a folk-tale about a goddess who is tricked by her brothers into swallowing some betel nut which has already been in her mouth. Since whatever comes into

contact with saliva is polluted and renders impure whoever eats it, the goddess is condemned by her brothers to be eternally inferior to them and, indeed, to be the goddess of the Poleyas, a sub-caste of the Untouchables. According to Douglas the Coorgs “treat the body as if it were a beleaguered town, every ingress and exit guarded for spies and traitors. Anything issuing from the body is never to be readmitted but strictly avoided. The most dangerous pollution is for anything which has once emerged gaining re-entry” (p. 147). For the Coorgs “the model of the exits and entrances of the body is a doubly apt symbolic focus of fears for their minority standing in the larger society” since (i) they share “with other castes [a] fear of what is outside and below” and (ii) “living in their mountain fastness they were also an isolated community, having only occasional and controllable contact with the world around” (p. 148). What is immediately striking about this folk-tale is that it testifies to concerns about the dangers of saliva *and*, quite explicitly, to concerns about relations of precedence between castes and about threats to caste membership arising from the dangers of pollution.²² The latter are indeed concerns about social structure and, more specifically, about the boundaries of social groups but these concerns are, in this context, themselves informed by notions of purity and impurity. The caste system and the anxieties attached to it are unintelligible except in relation to preoccupations about purity. It follows that these anxieties are as much in need of explanation as those about saliva. They do not meet the required condition for figuring in the *explanans* of a successful counterpart explanation. On the other hand, anxieties which stem from the Coorgs’ isolated position, though admittedly intelligible independently of concepts of purity, do not have, or at least have not been shown to have, an intelligible relation to anxieties about bodily emissions.

A similar problem affects Douglas’ more tentative suggestion that the counterpart model can be applied to Leviticus. “The Israelites”, she says, “were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. In their beliefs all the bodily issues were polluting, blood, pus, excreta, semen etc. The threatened boundaries would be well-mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body” (p. 148). As in the previous case the difficulty is that it needs to be *shown* that anxieties about boundaries have an in-

telligible relation to purity regulations. A general concern for social boundaries, while it would explain distrust of strangers, does not seem to explain fear of bodily issues. It is interesting to note that in Lev. 20.22ff, the injunction to keep the rules governing purity, ("lest the land spew you out"), occurs side by side with the injunction that the Israelites should distinguish themselves from the nations which God has driven out of the land. Since God has made a clear separation between Israel and the nations, Israel must make a clear separation between clean and unclean beasts. Here, as in the Coorg folk-tale, the concerns about group distinctiveness which are *explicitly* related to beliefs about purity, are themselves informed by concepts of pollution. It is the uncleanness of those who do what is forbidden by the purity regulations which is the basis for Israel's distinctiveness. So again, the anxieties about the body politic which are explicitly linked with purity regulations do not meet the condition required for figuring in the *explanans* of a counterpart explanation of anxieties about purity.

It seems then that the counterpart model, as it stands, will not do. Nevertheless there are important features of Mary Douglas' approach which ought to be incorporated in any satisfactory account of beliefs and practices relating to purity. There is first of all her emphasis on the need to understand purity regulations within "a total structure of thought" which may include both beliefs about gods and beliefs pertaining to society. This surely holds good and is precisely what the network model demands. Secondly, whether or not purity regulations *always* have some bearing on beliefs about and attitudes towards society, in some contexts they undoubtedly do, and where this is so one would fail to appreciate their significance if one did not take this into account. This is really only a corollary of the first point, and is accommodated by the network model. It must be stressed however that on the network model beliefs and attitudes concerning society are not independently intelligible reference points for explaining metaphysical beliefs and purity regulations. Nor are they the latent symbolic content of metaphysical beliefs and purity regulations. On the network model we can account for the bearing of (not necessarily systematic) metaphysics and of purity regulations upon social attitudes in terms of an adequate analysis of their *manifest* content; that is, an analysis

which searches out the logical consequences of their conjunction with one another and with beliefs drawn from the particular context under investigation. Such an analysis requires an interpretation, along lines suggested in this paper, of the linguistic utterances which articulate the beliefs.

A feature of the counterpart model, or rather of its motivation, which we noted but have not discussed, is the idea that metaphysical beliefs and purity regulations, *when taken at their face value*, do not suffice to explain ritual behaviour.²³ A supposed advantage of the counterpart model was that sociological counterparts *do* suffice to explain ritual behaviour. The network model is neutral on this matter. It is primarily concerned to determine the content of beliefs, attitudes and practices in all their ramifications, and takes issue with the counterpart model insofar as that model involves claims about (latent) content. A discussion of whether the idea behind the counterpart model does constitute a genuine problem would require a separate paper. For the purpose of the present discussion the important point to note is that even if there is a genuine problem here, there is no reason to suppose that its solution would vitiate the network model.

The whole discussion in this section has a bearing on questions concerning the authenticity and coherence of isolated sayings within the Synoptic traditions. In the light of what we have said it would not be surprising if Jesus' rejection of the notion of impure foods in Mk. 7.15 were connected with his advocacy of love of enemies in Mt. 5.43. A radical questioning of the general concept of impurity in a context where it informs attitudes to foods *and* attitudes to people would account for both of these sayings. It is often suggested that it would have been impossible for a first century Jew to reject notions of purity in such a categorical manner. The impossibility here is presumably meant to be psychological or sociological, having to do with the hold of purity regulations in traditional societies. But if Jesus advocated love of enemies, and this implied love of those classified as unclean, then consistency would have required him to reject the concept of uncleanness with its implicit negative evaluation. Love of a person is incompatible with believing that he or she carries the kind of dangers associated with being unclean. We have in this example an illustration of both

conceptual revision and the interanimation²⁴ of beliefs stressed by the network model. Of course, we still need to understand the power which concepts of purity exercised on Jesus' contemporaries if we are to understand why it was that even after he had rejected them his followers continued to hold to them. But their continuing to be held need not constitute an objection to the proposed interpretation. Rather it would reflect the originality of Jesus and his freedom in advocating beliefs and values which were radically opposed to those implicit in the purity regulations of either Leviticus or Qumran.²⁵

The practical import of our discussion has been towards a deeper examination of the content of religious beliefs and of their role within a wider network of beliefs. It might be felt that this emphasis is more appropriate to systematic theological and philosophical literature than to that to be found in the Bible. However, if the network model is right, every discourse is in a sense systematic in that to understand the utterances it contains one has to understand a network of beliefs, and thus of potential utterances. Biblical literature is systematic in that sense, but that does not mean that it is the product of purely theoretical concerns. Nor does it mean that an understanding of the functions of utterances in particular contexts is irrelevant to a total understanding of their meaning. Our earlier remarks were intended not so much to minimise function but to caution against its overemphasis.

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¹ "function for the speaker": This means the function which the speaker intends his utterance to have. A full discussion of function would need to distinguish functions which operate through conventions from those which do not. It would also need to consider the possibility that an utterance can function in ways which are not intended by the speaker.

² R. M. Hare, "Theology and Falsification", in Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds.), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (SCM, London, 1955), pp. 99-103, and reprinted in B. Mitchell (ed.), *Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford University Press, London, 1971), pp. 15-18.

³ R. B. Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*, Eddington Memorial Lecture, 1955 (Cambridge University Press) and reprinted in Mitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-91.

⁴ Quotations are from the E. T. *Jesus and the Word* (Collins, London and Glasgow, 1958). References are to this edition.

⁵ See, for example, the discussion of the meaning of obedience to the demand of God in Bultmann, *op. cit.*, ch. III, §§ 4 and 5.

⁶ SCM, London, 1976.

⁷ This does not rule out the possibility that a term can be correctly applied on particular occasions even where the speaker does not know its full or technical sense. Likewise successful communication can take place on particular occasions even where neither speaker nor listener knows the full or technical sense of the term.

⁸ To take S to express the proposition that p is to hold that if one uttered S one would say that p.

⁹ Propositions are to declarative sentences what concepts are to terms. The same proposition/concept can be expressed by different sentences/terms in the same language or in different languages. The proposition/concept which a sentence/term expresses depends upon its sense. Propositions determine the content of beliefs. This is only a rough guide. Many refinements are necessary.

¹⁰ The account of convention here is basically that of David Lewis. See his *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969) and "Languages and Language" in Keith Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science Vol VII (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1975) pp. 3-35. Lewis does not apply his account to regularities of acceptance and rejection and might well not approve of such an application.

¹¹ Recall note 9.

¹² Linguistic innovation need not involve a conflict with established conventions. New conventions may supplement the old ones.

¹³ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Nisbet, London, 1946), p. 38.

¹⁴ Dodd, *op. cit.*, pp. 43ff.

¹⁵ (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971).

¹⁶ The network image has been employed in various ways by philosophers of science. See C. G. Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science*, International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science II. 7 (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1952), p. 36; W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (The M. I. T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960), especially ch. I; Mary Hesse, *The Structure of Scientific Inference* (Macmillan, London and Basingstoke, 1974), especially chs. 1 and 2.

¹⁷ It does not affect the essential point of this example if basic theses concerning God's goodness and omnipotence are reckoned to the doctrine of the attributes rather than to the doctrine of creation.

¹⁸ Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. Page references are to the Pelican Books edition of 1970.

¹⁹ Objections to this assumption are suggested by the discussion of metaphysics and cosmology in Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 108ff.

²⁰ The perspective on the sense of linguistic expressions suggested earlier can be used to provide an account of metaphor.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of problems in symbolist anthropology, see John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory, a philosophical study of theories of religion in social anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976), especially ch. 3.

²² This comes out clearly in the account of the folk-tale in the ethnography upon which Mary Douglas relies. See M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (Asia Publishing House, London, 1952), p. 105.

²³ This idea lies behind Douglas' dissatisfaction with "naive" theological accounts such as that set out on p. 46 above.

²⁴ This term is employed by Quine, *op. cit.*, who borrows it from I. A. Richards.

²⁵ For a fuller discussion of Jesus' attitude to purity see John K. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (Darton Longman & Todd, London, 1980).

DUMUZI AT THE COURT OF DAVID

G. R. H. WRIGHT

“...Merry be we may
Tomorrow is our sheep-shearing day”

II Sam. 13 has the form of a Maupassant *conte*. Amnon, the eldest son of King David, is sick with longing for his half-sister Tamar (the full sister of Absalom, Amnon's next eldest and well favoured brother). On the advice of his uncle, Amnon feigns physical illness and, when the king visits him, expresses the wish that Tamar may come to prepare food for him in his apartment to cheer his sick-room somewhat. The king gives orders to this effect, and Amnon seizes the contrived opportunity to force his sister's compliance—in spite of her outcry. He then feels an extreme revulsion towards her and, to her distress, has her thrust out. She returns to her brother Absalom's house and acquaints him with the events. Absalom enjoins that she make no public disturbance on the score and himself works her revenge. After two years he announces he will celebrate the sheep shearing festival and requests that his father David and all his house join him as his guests. David declines personally but on being pressed to that effect gives permission for Amnon (his eldest son) to attend in his place. Absalom orders his servants to assassinate Amnon when he is well under the influence of drink and this is done.

A very well told story of the realist genre, true to life and its psychology and the model of that household tragedy which besets every oriental court from Amurath to Amurath. However in this instance various elements clearly demonstrate a legendary *Vorlage* for this tale of low life in high places, this flawed *fête champêtre*.

Should we read an announcement of marriage between a prince and a servant girl named respectively Charming and Cinderella we would question its actuality. And so it is here. The name of the king's son Amnon has as its root *ʾamn* (cf. Babylonian *imana*, Assyrian *amuna* etc.) and in the adjectival form gives true, faithful, trustworthy, reliable etc. Amnon is thus the “true son”¹ and in his

appearance at the sheep shearing² scene “the faithful shepherd”. Equally straightforward Tamar is the palm tree (*tmr*).³ The protagonists of this tale are thus identified as Tammuz and Ishtar/Astarte or to begin at the beginning: Dumuzi, the true son (DUMU-ZI) and faithful shepherd (SIPA-ZI) and Innana, the Lady of the Palm Tree (NINAMNA), the “mother” goddess at once sister, mother and beloved of the shepherd Dumuzi.⁴

One or two other explicit religious properties are added to the setting to keep this origin in mind. For the private *agape*, their love feast, Amnon requests and Tamar offers “cakes”, these are the “heart shaped” cakes baked for the “Queen of Heaven” cf. Jeremiah 7, 18 & 44, 19.⁵ Again when Tamar comes to the chamber of her man she has on a garment of diverse colours/a long sleeved robe. This is the *ketonet paspasim*. It is not the usual garment of unmarried princesses as a later editor glossed, but is a sacred robe (of the hierodule of Ishtar)—exactly that sort of garment which Joseph donned to his misfortune—perhaps as an inheritance from his mother (Gen. 37).⁶

With this origin of the Amnon-Tamar episode in mind it is useful to consider a nearby passage in the first book of Samuel. I Sam. 25 presents the tale of David and Abigail. This is likewise a short-story but of another genre. In place of the enclosed harem intrigue it breathes the fresh air of a rural setting and is overtly a story of grace and compassion, a pastoral symphony. Underneath however it deals with a similar theme; in fact it deals with the same events—it is a doublet of Amnon and Tamar.

David estranged from King Saul is reduced to brigandage and has his hide-out among the wild precipitous cliffs above the Dead Sea in the wilderness of Judaea. In the vicinity a man of great substance, Nabal, pastures his sheep. At the time of the sheep shearing festival David sends to collect his “rake-off” in terms of the “protection racket” he is running. Nabal refuses payment and David resolves to make an example of him. However Nabal’s beautiful and intelligent wife Abigail, being informed of the danger, collects a suitable payment in kind and hastens out to intercept David’s wrathful approach, throwing herself unreservedly on his good intentions. David is charmed, accepts the payment and Abigail, proclaiming that she is his handmaid, affirms divine sup-

port for David in all that he does. The sequel can be given in the words of Frazer "Then turning homeward she hastened with a lighter heart to the house where her boorish husband and his hinds, little wotting what had passed on the hills, were drinking deep and late after the sheep-shearing. That night over the wine she wisely said nothing. But next morning when he was sober, she told him and his heart died within him. The shock to his nervous system, *or perhaps something stronger*, was too much for him. Within ten days he was a dead man and after a decent interval the widow was over the hills and far away with the captain of brigands".⁷

One very significant fact in connection with these events, however, does not appear in I Samuel and it puts them in a light clean contrary to the intention of the story teller, who was weaving a pastoral romance in which David and Abigail stood clothed in golden sunlight. According to I Chr. 2:16-17, Abigail was a sister or half-sister of David and doubtless in the source of I Samuel 25 it is this sister who delivered her previous husband over to death and became her brother David's wife.⁸

When this fact is taken into account it would seem that the events of both II Samuel 13 and I Samuel 25 represent a working over of a common source. Reduced to essentials this would be the record: there is an irregular sexual union (overtly or covertly incestuous) and in this connection a man is violently done to death on the occasion of merry making at a sheep shearing festival.

All this is to say that should we wish to go back from these historical romances to a religious milieu we could express this argument in terms of a rite celebrated on a licentious, bucolic occasion comprising a *hieros gamos* with an associated sacrifice of the god-lover or his substitute. Further in view of the royalty of the *dramatis personae* we might say the sacrifice of the divine king or his substitute. And such a congerie is nicely relevant to the figures of Dumuzi and Innana revealed in Amnon and Tamar.

Dumuzi the faithful shepherd, the sustainer of life, never loses his human nature (he is an early king of Uruk) and is therefore a truly dying god—a suffering shepherd. He is equally in his vulnerability the beloved of women who (wish to) express with him every relation in one relation; mother, sister and mistress; thereby soon destroying him to wail for his loss.⁹ Innana of the palm tree

and store-house¹⁰ is fully divine from the best family of gods, virgin in that she is no man's creature but is single willed.¹¹ She is the destruction of all who seek the fruit of the tree, she gathers all things mortal into her store—*la belle fille sans merci*. The joint myth of Dumuzi and Innana is thus the ever recurring tale of brevity and loss—the never ending wrong.

To put this more formally: "Dumuzi is the god *par excellence* in the rite of the *hieros gamos*.¹² The cult of Dumuzi centres around two poles, the marriage of the God to Innana and the lamenting of his early death. The marriage was ritually consummated in a cult drama a *hieros gamos* in which the king took on the identity of the god, a priestess that of the goddess"...¹³ Also perhaps it may be said that when death was required to save or sustain life it was Dumuzi (or his representative) who suffered¹⁴—in short he was the scapegoat.¹⁵

The next concern is the setting of the dramatic action. Amnon, the faithful shepherd, is done to death at a sheep-shearing festival. And lest this be reckoned simply as incident, then it must be remembered that a similar festival determines Nabal's end. What then did this sheep-shearing festival connote in the ancient Middle East? As is almost universal in a rural economy sheep-shearing was *de rigueur* the occasion for a good time, it was a *Yom Tob* of feasting and hilarity.¹⁶ Furthermore it took place in those parts somewhere about March/April and thus more or less at the time of the Spring equinox,¹⁷ generally the juncture for reckoning the New Year. Therefore in spite of the fact that ancient records give little detailed information in this connection the culture historians always emphasise the religious importance of this festival e.g. "One other festival with its sacrificial element belonging to the nomadic period (*of the Hebrews*).... is the feast of sheep-shearing".¹⁸ Moreover in Mesopotamia there is some further documentation concerning sheep-shearing. A 'sacred' sheep-shearing shed is mentioned in a tablet from Lagash of Lugal Anna ca 2,300 BC. "In the month (= feast?) the building for sheep-shearing".¹⁹ More to the point a series of royal letters (48-50) of King Ammesaduqa (the penultimate king of the dynasty of Hammurabi) give orders that "Die Schafschur wird in Neujahrsfesthaus abgehalten werden".²⁰

Was this sheep-shearing feast indeed a sacrificial feast? There is evidence for the sacrifice of the first born male of the flock on the oc-

casion of sheep-shearing among modern Palestinian peasants and bedouin²¹ and this has naturally raised the presumption of a similar practice among ancient herdsmen of that region and therewith a connection with the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb at the Passover.²²

As to any sacrificial element in connection with sheep-shearing celebrations in Mesopotamia, there is no direct record. If sheep-shearing is stated to take place in the House of the New Year Feast, it is not stated that it took place in connection with this feast. And should there be such an association (which is not impossible, or even unlikely), present opinion concerning the New Year Feast does not emphasise any essential sacrificial element—to the contrary of many things said in the past.²³ (Albeit the ritual purification of the temple on the fifth day by the carcase of a slaughtered ram echoes in details a purificatory sacrifice as symbolised in the scapegoat ritual.²⁴ On the other hand the Mesopotamian New Year Feast is the occasion for the sacred marriage. However much the pervasiveness of this rite may have been whittled down in recent discussion, this feast is one occasion where it is firmly attested.²⁵

The balance of these observations may be stated as follows. In the ancient Middle East the sheep-shearing festival fell at the same time as the New Year and there is record of the association of shearing with the New Year Festival House in Mesopotamia. Among the West Semites it seems that a sacrifice of the first born accompanied both the sheep-shearing festival and the New Year Feast, while in Mesopotamia the New Year was certainly the occasion of the dramatic performance of the sacred marriage between the king as the God and the Goddess personified in a hierodule. Therefore without recourse to general folk-lore it is reasonable to think that in the ancient Middle East a sheep-shearing feast would be an understood setting for a story of sexual union and killing deriving from an ultimate “religious” pattern.

If then the *dramatis personae* together with the *mise-en-scene* of the Samuel stories give evidence of a religious origin, then the appearance of similar origins for further details in these stories is unlikely to be ‘coincidental’.

These can be adduced. In the Amnon story Tamar’s own brother is Absalom. Now Absalom has been seen as a Shamash (Samson)

figure,²⁶ however few have drawn attention to this fact in the present connection. And Innana/Ishtar of the palm tree is certainly the sister of the God Shamash.²⁷

What blood relation Innana is to the Faithful Shepherd, Tammuz, is not clear.²⁸ She is his mother and his sister in the excess of her passion. Another goddess Geshtinnana (The Grape Vine) is specifically identified as Dumuzi's sister by blood,²⁹ she seems equally to share with Innana in his intimate affections and it is difficult not to see her as a characterisation of the same principle as Innana.³⁰ In any event incest seems an essential concomitant in the legend of figures of the Dumuzi type: Attis, Adonis, Osiris, Dionysos;³¹ and the incestuous nature of the union between Amnon and Tamar cannot be regarded as mere narrative incident in view of the blood relationship between David and Abigail in the parallel story of I Samuel.³²

That included in the Mesopotamian Dumuzi cycle was a legend of sororal incest seems now fairly clear. And it has a cast not unlike the Amnon story. "The text inscribed on BM 23702 ... is a 59 line extract which constitutes the first part of a narrative poem of unknown length whose remaining sections are still unrecorded ... concerned with the deeds of the gods".³³ In this myth it is recorded that Dumuzi inveigled his sister into his private quarters (his secluded sheep-fold) with, it would seem, the manifest intent of seducing her. To this end he regaled her with drink and then called her attention to the natural behaviour of the flock. The sister protests (or feigns) ignorance but Dumuzi makes his meaning very plain. At this critical point the text is refractory but there seems to be indications of a parallel to Tamar's outcry. Dumuzi's sister likewise may be using the same maidenly arguments. She will be publically shamed and there is basically no need for this as a marriage can be arranged. And here unfortunately the text breaks off. Whether the bucolic poetry of this myth turned to tragic in the later passages to provide an extended parallel to the Amnon episode would make an interesting discovery.

And finally a more oblique consideration, Amnon's rejection of Tamar is true to life, but it also has a parallel in the Mesopotamian literature. In his brush with Innana, Gilgamesh expresses himself in a similar fashion—and even more forth-rightly. "You are an

open door, a palace which crushes the hero who enters it. What shepherd can please you for long" etc. etc.³⁴ In short, you have been the ruin of other good men and you will be the ruin of me—get out! Perhaps the tenor of these remarks does something to indicate the original background to the Amnon story which does not appear in the book of Samuel—i.e. how Amnon came to be "vexed ... and sick for his sister Tamar".

Here then is the conclusion to the above observations.

At the court of David, king in Jerusalem, there is set a family tragedy of unwise relations—a beautiful virgin in the event is deadly and a man is cut off while feasting at the sheep folds. All these elements can be found in the Sumerian and Akkadian "religious" literature of Dumuzi and Innana. As, likely enough, they existed in the "secular" literature and folk tale of the age. At a late juncture, after a currency of 2,000 years, they were drawn on to give a dramatic impact to the Hebrew Book of Samuel. It is a common place to note the skilful use of old motifs in writing the "salvation history of Israel". Maybe—for the very simple minded. For others, bones must have rattled horribly in the cupboard, for they knew as much about these things as we do.

EPILOGUE

But if a god die shall he live again? That is the question. There is a family likeness among Gods in the ancient Middle East, who died young—images of brevity and loss. That all these Gods rose again from the dead in some manner (obverse images of consolation) was something like a learned religion two or three generations ago.³⁵ Recently this faith has been shaken and e.g. Professor Kramer gave a scholarly "last judgement" sentencing Dumuzi to "the second death".³⁶ Nonetheless after a few years the god has been delivered from this eternal fate by the scholarship of Professor Falkenstein and Dumuzi now can spend half the year upstairs as a true seasonal deity.³⁷

Perhaps in this sign more of the Frazerian theology will be rehabilitated, and old intuitions eventually be sustained by new textual discoveries.

In the David and Abigail story the figure of Nabal is a striking one. By name he is identified as the fool (NBL) of the psalms who saith in his heart there is no god.³⁸ And his rôle in the story is clearly that of the mock king, king of fools—the sacrificial *Ersatz-König*. Among all the figures of this type assembled by Frazer and his generation the *Shar-Puḫi*³⁹ of ancient Mesopotamia was a “star”. In his appearance at the New Year Festival in the *Bit Akitu* he was a year spirit⁴⁰ (the *eniautos daemon* according to Jane Harrison’s hypostasis).⁴¹ This was the gospel of Zimmern and Ebeling etc. Of late years it has been entirely expunged from the record. Whatever be the relation of the *Bit Akitu* and the New Year Festival, there is no evidence of the presence of the *Shar-Puḫi* on the occasion of the New Year. No substitute king is sacrificed and the real king does not enjoy a resurrection⁴² a pity, because Nabal, the doomed fool⁴³ who “feasts and drinks and after 10 days the Lord smote him that he died” conforms exactly to this image.

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¹ For the etymology of Amnon v. M. Noth, *Die Israelitischen Personennamen*, Hildesheim 1966, p. 228; Koehler *Lexikon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* pp. 60ff.

² The importance of the sheep-shearing setting was noticed by A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Licht des Alten Orients*, Leipzig 1916, pp. 460, 471.

³ For the etymology of Tamar v. Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 230; Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 1033.

⁴ For a convenient outline of Innana, Dumuzi and their legends v. *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, ed. Haussig, Vol. I; Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient: Dumuzi, pp. 51ff; Innana, pp. 81ff. Specific studies are: H. Zimmern, *Der Babylonische Gott Tamuz*, Leipzig 1909; S. Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, Oxford 1914; T. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz*, Harvard 1970. For Dumuzi as a shepherd cf. Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, p. 161.

⁵ Cf. P. Ackroyd, *Cambridge Biblical Commentary*, Samuel II, Cambridge 1977, p. 121; A. P. Smith, *International Critical Commentary*, Samuel, London 1899, pp. 317ff; A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp. 329, 611-12. In the Hebrew of 2 Sam. 13,6 the verb “make cakes” > LBB, from which is derived the word for heart *Lebhabh*. These cakes, obviously, were intended to be of magical import, whether therapeutic or aphrodisiac. v. Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 471. Cf. Akkadian *akal lebbu* and Greek *κολλυρίς* (*kolourí*) still popular in the Levant.

⁶ Cf. A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp. 329, 331 n. 3; G. R. H. Wright in *Vetus Testamentum*, 12, 1972, p. 481; S. R. Driver, *Notes on Samuel*, Oxford 1913, p. 298.

⁷ v. Sir J. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament* II, London 1913, p. 505.

⁸ The suppression of this relationship on moral grounds is exactly the sort of thing usually ascribed to later editorial activity.

⁹ T. Jacobsen has particularly concerned himself with the psycho-analysis of Dumuzi v. *Toward the Image of Tammuz*, Cambridge, Mass. 1970, NB pp. 73ff; *The Treasures of Darkness*, New Haven 1976, NB pp. 23ff. For the mother-sister-mistress attitude v. *Image of Tammuz*, p. 77.

¹⁰ For these aspects and etymologies of Innana v. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz*, pp. 27ff; *The Treasures of Darkness*, pp. 36ff, 135ff.

¹¹ This psychic virginity = freedom from possession by the Jungian *animus*.

¹² For the *hieros gamos* in this connection v. E. Van Buren, "The Sacred Marriage in Early Times in Mesopotamia", *Orientalia* 13, 1944, pp. 1-72; I. Wheatley, *The Hieros Gamos in the Ancient Near East*, Iowa University, 1966.

¹³ v. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz*, pp. 9, 29.

¹⁴ NB the ubiquity of the kid (Dumuzi's emblem) as a substitute sacrifice cf. e.g. S. Hooke, *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion*, Oklahoma 1963, pp. 37ff., 51ff.

¹⁵ For the concept of the scapegoat and its relevance in this connection v. Sir J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, The Scape Goat I, NB, pp. 38-46, 224; cf. S. Hooke, *op. cit.*, p. 51ff.

¹⁶ v. F. Kraus, *Staatliche Viehhaltung im Altbabylonischen Lande Larsa*, Amsterdam 1966, p. 166; *Harpers Bible Dictionary*, New York 1973, p. 672.

¹⁷ v. G. Dalman, *Arbeit u. Sitte in Palästina*¹, 2, Hildesheim 1944, p. 422.

¹⁸ v. Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, London 1961, p. 137.

¹⁹ v. Thureau Dangin, *Recueil de Tablettes Chaldéennes*, Paris 1903, p. 19; cf. A. Jeremias, *Handbuch der altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, No. 36, Berlin 1929, p. 294 n. 5.

²⁰ v. R. Frankena, *Briefe aus dem British Museum*, Leiden 1966, pp. 39ff., Nos 48-52; cf. B. Meissner, *OLZ*, 1911, p. 99.

²¹ v. G. Dalman, *loc. cit.*, A Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, IV, Wien 1908, p. 285.

²² v. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, London 1968, pp. 489ff; cf. S. Hooke, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

²³ The development of opinion can be found discussed in O. Gurney, "Tammuz Reconsidered", *JSS* VII, 1962, pp. 155-60; cf. W. von Soden in *Festschrift für V. Christen*, Wien 1956, pp. 100-7 as contrasted with H. Zimmern, *Zum Babylonischen Neujahrsfest*, Leipzig 1918, pp. 6-7, 9; Ebeling, *Tod und Leben*, Berlin 1931, p. 61ff. The "full treatment" of the New Year Feast according to the old style as a seasonal regeneration drama involving sacraments of death, rebirth, marriage etc. can be found expressed in Th. Gaster, *Thespis*, New York 1961, at pp. 62ff. *et pass.*

²⁴ Cf. E. O. James in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1949, p. 112 "An atonement was made for the king and the city by the cutting off the head of a sheep and after smearing the walls of the temple with the carcase (= the *kuppuru*) the body and the head were thrown into the river to remove all defilement as in the Hebrew scapegoat ritual".—i.e. *it was expedient that one* (lamb of god) *should die for the people*.

²⁵ v. O. Gurney, *op. cit.*, pp. 156 ff.; cf. I. Wheatley, *op. cit.*, pp. 41ff.

²⁶ Cf. A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

²⁷ For Innana's astral pedigree—the evening star, daughter of the moon god and sister of the sun god v. *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* I, p. 82.

²⁸ Dumuzi was recognised as partly human in nature and his divine parentage was not necessarily very elevated cf. Hooke, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁹ v. *Wörterbuch* I, p. 67 cf. M. Astour, *Helleno-Semitica*, Leiden 1965, p. 174.

³⁰ Cf. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Chicago 1967, p. 128.

³¹ The legends in this connection relating to Attis, Adonis, Osiris are conveniently collected in Sir J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* IV. For the Cretan account of the pedigree of Dionysos (Zagreus) where all forms of incest mother, sister and daughter are compounded v. Diodoros V, 75; Firmicus Maternus VI, 5, Athenagoras, *Libellus pro Christianis* 20. Such a chain of incest has been recognised in the Dumuzi legend (rightly or wrongly) v. M. Astour, *Helleno-Semitica*, p. 174. The same compulsive feeling is operative in the recent dogma of the immaculate conception. This incest motif has been seen as founded both in psychology and social anthropology: as an image of the yearning for utmost self realisation, and as primitive man's device to defeat the inheritance provisions of *Mutter-recht*.

³² The suppression of this relationship in I Samuel would be a typical piece of moral editing. Indeed this may have been more extensive. Amnon and Absalom are identified as sons of David born in Hebron by different mothers (who otherwise are unnoticed in the bible). On the other hand the bible seems uncertain as to the name of the son born of David's union with Abigail, the other marriage of this period. In any event, whether Chileab (II Sam. 3,3) or Daniel (I Ch. 3,1) or Dalmeah (II Sam. 3,3 LXX), he plays no part in the biblical record. Were the two stories at one time more closely linked? Was Amnon once reckoned the son of David and Abigail? Or were Absalom and Tamar children by this incestuous union? Absalom had more than fraternal cause for hatred of Amnon since he is stated (2 Sam. 14, 27) to have had a beautiful daughter named Tamar—doubtless from a union with his sister.

³³ v. S. Kramer, "The Jolly Brother", in *JANES* 5, 1973, pp. 243-53.

³⁴ v. A. Heidl, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, p. 42.

³⁵ Cf. Sir J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*: III. The Dying God, IV, Attis, Adonis, Osiris.

³⁶ "Dumuzi stayed dead and never rose again", v. *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* III, 1959, p. 198.

³⁷ v. A. Falkenstein, "Das Sumerische Mythos von Innanas Gang zur Unterwelt", in *Festschrift W. Caskel*, Leiden 1968, pp. 96-110, NB p. 109.

³⁸ For the etymology of Nabal cf. Koehler, *op. cit.*, pp. 589ff; cf. Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

³⁹ v. Sir J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*: The Dying God, pp. 113ff; The Scape Goat, pp. 354ff.

⁴⁰ v. O. Gurney, *op. cit.*, pp. 155 citing the works of Zimmern, Langdon, Palles, Hooke, Gaster etc.

⁴¹ v. J. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge 1912.

⁴² v. W. von Soden, "Gibt es ein Zeugnis" in *ZA* 1955, pp. 130-66; cf. O. Gurney, *op. cit.*, pp. 157ff. and, in *extensu*, H. Kummel, *Ersatzrituale* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten), Wiesbaden 1967, Excurs III. Der Ersatzkönigsritus in Mesopotamien. For a convenient translation of the ritual v. J. Pritchard, *ANET*, Princeton 1955, pp. 331-4; H. Zimmern, *Zum Babylonischen Neujahrsfest*.

⁴³ NABEL in Hebrew connotes one intellectually and morally undeveloped, one lacking in perception, discrimination and shame (i.e. in "wisdom"), one given to unreasonable behaviour (who would work "folly in Israel") cf. the Abbot of Unreason and the Lord of Misrule.

ZUR BILDERSPRACHE DES MANICHÄISMUS

(Review-article)

WOLF B. OERTER

Die sich mit den koptischen Texten des Manichäischen Schrifttums befassende Forschung hat dank einer Reihe von Spezialstudien in den letzten Jahren einen erfreulichen Aufschwung genommen.¹ Besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdient dabei die bereits 1977 als Magisterarbeit an der Universität Bonn eingereichte Studie von Victoria Arnold-Döben zur Bildersprache des Manichäismus.²

Nach der Einleitung (S. 3-6), in der Ziel und Methode der Arbeit kurz beschrieben und die herangezogenen Quellen summarisch vorgestellt werden, eine Begriffsdefinition von "Bild" gegeben, auf mögliche Einflüsse bzw. Parallelen außermanichäischer Kulturbereiche bei der Gestaltung manichäischer Sprachbilder hingewiesen sowie die breite Skala der verschiedenen Forschermeinungen über das Wesen des Manichäismus in ihren wesentlichen Positionen umrissen wird, folgt die Darstellung der anhand der manichäischen Primärliteratur ermittelten Sprachbilder. Dabei werden bestimmte Bilder und Bildgruppen bestimmten Themen zugeordnet, so daß sich drei größere Abschnitte ergeben: Bilder des kosmologischen und anthropologischen Bereichs (S. 7-107), Bilder des soteriologischen Bereichs (S. 108-170) und Bilder des zentralen kultischen Bereichs: Das Bema (S. 171-177). Schlußbemerkungen (S. 178-181) und ein Register vorwiegend manichäischer Termini technici und mythologischer Gestalten (S. 182ff.) beschließen vorliegende Studie.

Ausgehend von der Erkenntnis einer besonderen Bildhaftigkeit der manichäischen Texte als eines Darstellungsmittels der manichäischen Dogmatik, stellte sich die Verf. das Ziel, "die hauptsächlichen Elemente dieser Bildersprache nach ihrem Aussagegehalt und ihrer Bedeutung zu untersuchen" (S. 3). "Bild" steht dabei als übergeordnete Bezeichnung, die Symbol, Metapher, Allegorie, Gleichnis und Parabel gleichermaßen umfaßt und diese verschiede-

nen Ausdrucksmittel unterschiedslos zusammenfaßt (ebd.). Unge stellt bleibt auch die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Bild und Motiv zueinander, wozu man sich angesichts der auch in der Literaturwissenschaft zu diesem Problem herrschenden Vielfalt der Meinungen von der Verf. ein klärendes Wort gewünscht hätte; Motiv und Bild scheinen promiscue gebraucht (bspw. S. 4 und 6). Dies hat dann auch methodische Konsequenzen insofern, als viele Bilder im weiteren Verlauf der Untersuchung nicht näher hinterfragt werden und so die Grundvorstellungen des Mythos, die erst das eigentlich Manichäische der Bilder und Motive konstituieren, oftmals im Dunkeln bleiben müssen — entgegen der auf S. 6 bekundeten Absicht, die zur Anwendung gelangten Motive “als eigenständige manichäische Motive mit speziell manichäischem Inhalt” darzustellen. Zuzustimmen ist der Charakterisierung des Manichäismus als einer “Religion, in deren Mittelpunkt eine zugleich persönliche und kosmische Heilslehre steht” (S. 3), was sich in der von der manichäischen Bildersprache verhandelten Thematik niederschlägt. Daß dabei oft nicht zu unterscheiden ist, “ob es sich um die individuelle oder kosmische Erlösung handelt”, wie die Verf. auf S. 4 feststellt, liegt im Wesen des manichäischen Mythos begründet (man vgl. die treffende, noch immer gültige Charakterisierung des manichäischen Mythos von H.-J. Polotsky, in: *Le Muséon* 46 (1933), 248).

Die Quellenlage ist solide. Herangezogen werden Manichaica fast aller Sprachbereiche, voran die koptischen Quellen. Im Literaturverzeichnis (S. IX-XIV) zwar nicht gesondert angeführt, im weiteren jedoch benutzt finden sich A. Böhlig (ed.), *Kephalaia II*, Stuttgart 1966 (Manichäische Handschriften der Staatlichen Museen Berlin I, 2) und Theodor bar Khonai, *Lib. scholior. XI* (von der Verf. zitiert nach A. Adam, *Texte zum Manichäismus*, 2. Aufl. Berlin 1969). Unter den iranischen Quellen vermißt man W. Sundermann, *Mittelpersische und parthische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer*, Berlin 1973. Die chinesischen Quellen werden bereichert durch zwei bisher unveröffentlichte Übersetzungen von H. Schmidt-Glinterz: *Londoner Hymnenrolle* und *Die unvollendete (beschädigte) Hl. Schrift einer persischen Religion*. Die Sekundärquellen zum Manichäismus bleiben mit Ausnahme von Augustin (*Contra Faustum*; *Contra Epistulam Fundamenti*; *Enarratio in Psalmum*) und Ibn an-

Nadim (*Fihrist al-^cUlum* = G. Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehren und seine Schriften*, Leipzig 1862) weitestgehend unberücksichtigt.

Eines der zentralen Sprachbilder des Manichäismus ist das Bild vom Kämpfer (S. 86-92), das dogmatisch in der Protologie, dem ersten Akt des mythischen Dramas verankert ist. In ihm wird ein wesentlicher Zug des Manichäismus sichtbar: Im Gegensatz zu anderen gnostischen Systemen nimmt der Manichäismus keinen 'Fall' des Lichtes in die Finsternis an, sondern baut sein System auf der Vorstellung von einem Angriff aus der Tiefe auf (Quellennachträge: *Keph I* 26, 18ff; 30, 25-33; 69, 23-27. — Vgl. in diesem Zusammenhang auch die in *Keph I* 71, 19-31 geführte Polemik gegen den gnostischen Mythos vom 'Fall der Sophia'). Zum Schutze des Lichtes und gleichsam als Abwehrmaßnahme wird der Urmensch berufen und stellvertretend für den Lichtvater gegen die Finsternismächte in den Kampf geschickt, in dessen Verlauf er unterliegt. Es kommt so zur Vermischung von Licht und Finsternis; die Vermischung ist also streng genommen erst die Folge dieses Kampfes und der Niederlage des Urmenschen in diesem Kampf (gegen die Verf. S. 86). Das soeben Skizzierte ist bspw. Thema des 1. Thomaspsalmes (ThPs) im manichäischen Psalter (*PsB* 203, 3-205, 9). Eng verbunden mit diesem Sprachbild und wohl als eine Variante desselben Themas zu bezeichnen ist das Bild vom Jäger (S. 93-96). Seine dogmatische Abhandlung erfährt dieses Bild in Kap. 5 der Kephalaia (*Keph I* 28, 4-30, 11), dessen Sentenz die Weltabkehr der Seele und ihren Aufstieg zum Licht in der Zerstörung und Überwindung der ausgelegten Netze und Schlingen gewährleistet sieht, was besonders häufig im manichäischen Psalter anklingt (Quellennachträge: *PsB* 84, 27f.; 89, 24-29; 182, 3-12; 204, 19ff. = ThPs 1; 205, 29ff. = ThPs 2 (in modifizierter Form); 210, 23-27 = ThPs 5; 217, 1-13 = ThPs 11). Von zentraler Bedeutung für das Anliegen der manichäischen Lehre ist auch das Bild vom Hirten und dem Schaf (S. 71-77). An ihm wird die *interpretatio manichaica* besonders augenfällig: In dem bekannten Gleichnis vom Hirten und dem Lamm (*PsB* 9, 26-10, 9; vgl. die Verf., S. 72f. Quellennachtrag: Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai*, c. 28 = GCS, Bd. 16, S. 40, 33-41, 7. Bild des Köders: *PsB* 93, 4-7.10f. und M 316 = J. P. Asmussen, *Manichaeae Literature*, New York 1975, 121) wird dem manichäischen Gläubigen vor Augen geführt, daß die Niederlage des Urmenschen kalku-

liert ist (Quellennachträge: *Keph I* 26, 18-21; 148, 29-149,3) und letzten Endes als Sieg gefeiert werden kann (Quellennachträge: *Keph I* 55, 25-31; 67, 20-23; 82, 3-6). Die koptischen Quellen bezeichnen die Entsendung des Urmenschen deshalb folgerichtig auch als Präventivmaßnahme (Quellennachträge: *Keph I* 94, 28-95,1; *PsB* 204, 4f.), was auch bei den griechischen und lateinischen Autoren überliefert ist (F. C. Baur, *Das manichäische Religions-system nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt*, Tübingen 1831, 55-60).

Als gnostischer locus classicus des Bildes vom Königssohn, auf das die Verf. unter dem Bild der Fremdheit und der Heimat (S. 116-119) sowie dem Bild von der Perle und dem Schatz (S. 45-48) näher eingeht, darf das Perlenlied gelten (S. 117), dessen Parallelen zum manichäischen Urmensch-Mythos ins Auge springen (S. 117f.). Die Feststellung der Verf., die Terminologie des im Kontext der Thomasakten überlieferten Perlenliedes habe die manichäische Symbolsprache stark beeinflusst (S. 117), bedarf angesichts der Forschungsergebnisse von W. Bousset (*ZNW* 18, 1917, 1-39), G. Bornkamm (Hennecke/Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen II*, 1964, 303ff.) und P. Nagel (*Gnosis und Neues Testament*, hrsg. K.-W. Tröger, Berlin 1973, 149-182), denen zufolge die Thomasakten einer manichäischen Redaktion unterzogen worden sind, der Korrektur. Das Bild wird ausschließlich — darin folgen wir wieder der Verf. (S. 48) — für den Urmenschen gebraucht (hier seien die koptischen Belege nachgetragen: *Keph I* 50, 14-21. 26-31; 51, 18-23) und ihm analog auch auf Mani übertragen (ein Reflex auf Manis Vita, gestaltet im Bild von der Entführung des Königssohnes, findet sich in *PsB* 216, 2-12 = *ThPs* 10).

Zentrale Bilder der manichäischen Soteriologie sind zweifelsohne das Bild vom Arzt und dem Kranken (S. 97-107) und das des Rufes und der Antwort (S. 160ff.), die sich beide zusammenfassen ließen unter dem Bild vom Weckruf des Arztes (und Exorzisten). Die Trennung der menschlichen Einzelseele, die wesenseins ist mit der Lebendigen Seele, von ihrer Lichtheimat und ihr Gebundensein im menschlichen Körper als einer Form der materiellen Welt wird, allgemein gesprochen, als Krankheit empfunden, zu deren Überwindung, d.h. zur Rückfindung der Seele zu ihrem Ursprungsort, es eines Arztes, sprich: Erlösers bedarf (vgl. Verf. S. 97). Als wir-

Nr. 9, II; Chinesische Hymnenrolle H 78 a-d = Waldschmidt/Lentz, *Die Stellung Jesu im Manichäismus*, Berlin 1926, 110), die Fruchtbarkeit des Gartens steht als Symbol für das jenseitige Leben (*Hom* 39, 3-7) etc. Auf Grund der Selbstprädikation der Seele (bspw. *PsB* 175, 8f.) kann das soteriologische Wirken der Lichtkräfte und Manis auch im Bild des "Bauern" und "Pflanzers" beschrieben werden (einiges dazu bei Verf. S. 15 und 25-30). Als Quellennachträge seien hier genannt: M 6005/1.S./II/1-13 = W. Sundermann, *Mittelpersische und parthische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer*, Berlin 1973, 107: Urmensch; *Keph I* 53, 18-29 (Verf. S. 18, jedoch ohne den eschatologischen Bezug) und *PsB* 194, 25-28: Glanz-Jesus; *PsB* 145, 25-31: Sethel (= Seth) (gegen Verf. S. 27f.); *PsB* 208, 29-209, 5 = ThPs 3: Licht-Nous. Als Ausdruck jener eschatologischen Vorstellungen am klarsten greifbar wird das Bild vom Garten in ThPs 18 (= *PsB* 224, 17-225, 16).

Zuzustimmen ist dem von der Verf. geführten Nachweis, daß die von Augustin geprägte Gestalt des Jesus patibilis auf manichäischen Vorstellungen vom Lichtkreuz und der Emanation Jesu des Knaben beruht (S. 108-112), auch wenn die Verf. im Abschnitt über das Bild vom Knaben (S. 112-115) die bereits durch den innerkoptischen Sprachgebrauch von $\kappa\omicron\gamma\iota$ "Kleiner" (s. z.B. *PsB* 204, 22) und $\lambda\iota\lambda\omicron\gamma$ "Knabe" (s. z.B. *PsB* 209, 13.14.28 und passim.) gesetzten evidenten Unterschiede verwischt (hinter ersterem steht die allgemein gnostische Erlösergestalt 'Kleiner Knabe', hinter letzterem die in der Finsternis der Welt verlorene Gesamtheit der Menschenseelen).

Die der Arbeit beigelegte Druckfehlerberichtigung sei um folgende Errata ergänzt: S. VIII und XII lies: POLOTSKY; S. 55 im zitierten Text von *PsB* 63,9f. muß es heißen: "There is a gain"; S. 114, Anm. 20 lies: *Psalm*., 155, 24-27; S. 115 zum Zitat "he called an envoy" etc. lies: Anm. 22; S. 118 ist Anm. 8 zu berichtigen in: *Psalm*., 117, 3-10; S. 159 im Text statt Anm. 46 und 47 lies: 45 und 46; S. 163 muß es unter Anm. 10 richtigerweise heißen: "Vgl. Zitat S. 160f. Anm. 2".

Vorliegende Arbeit darf als erster Versuch dieser Art begrüßt werden. Sie zeigt zugleich, daß die Beschäftigung mit dem System Manis noch längst nicht als abgeschlossen gelten kann.

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Nachschrift

Spezialstudien älteren und neueren Charakters (bis einschließlich 1978) finden sich berücksichtigt in: *Der Manichäismus*. Unter Mitwirkung von Jes P. Asmussen eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert von A. Böhlig, Zürich-München, Artemis, 1980, S. 354-362 (Die Gnosis, Bd. 3). Seit A. Adams zweiter Auflage der *Texte zum Manichäismus* (Berlin 1969) liegt damit wieder — aber erstmals in deutscher Übersetzung — eine Anthologie manichäischer Texte vor, die durch eine auszugsweise Wiedergabe des Kölner Mani-Kodexes sowie noch unveröffentlichter Neubearbeitungen der chinesischen Texte auf den neuesten Stand gebracht ist. Eine dem Quellenteil (S. 75-301) vorangestellte Einleitung (S. 5 bis 71) nimmt zu den (Original- und Sekundär-) Quellen zum Manichäismus (S. 6-12) und deren Auswertung durch die Forschung (S. 12-21) Stellung. Besonders verdienstlich angesichts des disparaten Quellenmaterials sind dabei die Abschnitte zum manichäischen Schrifttum (S. 44-54), wobei der manichäischen Hymnendichtung besondere Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt wird, und zur manichäischen Mission in ihrer Bedeutung für die Nomenklatur und den Inhalt der manichäischen Lehre (S. 54-70); hier wird vor allem der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Manichäismus und Buddhismus nachgegangen (vgl. dazu nachträglich die Arbeiten von H.-J. Klimkeit: "Das Kreuzessymbol in der zentralasiatischen Religionsbegegnung", *ZRGG* XXXI/1 (1979), 99-115 und "Stūpa and Parinirvāṇa as Manichaean Motifs", in: A. L. Dallapiccola (Ed.), *The Stūpa. Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*, Wiesbaden 1980, 229-237). Der Einleitungsteil will dem Leser "eine Grundlage für das Verständnis bieten, das er für die Lektüre der Texte benötigt" (S. 71); eine eingehendere Analyse der manichäischen Lehre, etwa durch Auslotung der manichäischen Bild- und Motivwelt war daher nicht zu erwarten (angesprochen finden sich immerhin das Bild vom Köder: S. 119 mit Anm. 58, Behandlung finden auch die Parakletenproblematik: S. 67 und passim. sowie die Vorstellung vom Jesus patibilis: S. 57f.). Vielleicht ist hierin auch der Grund dafür zu suchen, daß die für den Manichäismus konstitutive Drei-Zeiten-Lehre keine Erwähnung findet (sie ist sowohl in den westlichen als auch — in modifizierter Form — in den östlichen Quellen bezeugt: P. Nagel, "Bemerkungen zum manichäischen Zeit- und Geschichtsverständnis", in: *Studia Coptica*, hrsg. P. Nagel, Berlin 1974, 201-214 (Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten 45)). Die Auswahl der Originalquellen repräsentiert das an Gattungen reiche und geographisch weit verbreitete manichäische Schrifttum, wobei auf die Wiedergabe möglichst abgeschlossener Textstücke Wert gelegt wurde. Zur Abrundung des Bildes vom Manichäismus kommen die wichtigsten Antihäretiker und Berichterstatter zu Wort. Eine Auffächerung des Quel-

lenteils nach sachlichen Gesichtspunkten (beispielsweise die Zusammenfassung der Quellen zum Leben Manis, zum manichäischen System, zur Ethik und Hierarchie der Manichäer, usw.) erleichtert die Arbeit mit vorliegender Anthologie.

¹ Vgl. die Beiträge in: *Menschenbild in Gnosis und Manichäismus*, hrsg. P. Nagel, Halle 1979 (Wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg 39 (K5)). Soeben erschienen: P. Nagel, *Die Thomaspsalmen des koptisch-manichäischen Psalmenbuches*, Berlin 1980 (Quellen. Ausgewählte Texte aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche. Neue Folge hrsg. F. de Boor und W. Ullmann, Heft 1).

² *Die Bildersprache des Manichäismus*, Köln, E. J. Brill, 1978 (Arbeitsmaterialien zur Religionsgeschichte 3), XIV + 184 S. Preis nicht angegeben. ISSN 0341-8529.

VALUES OF CONFUCIANISM

(Review article)

VITALY A. RUBIN

The last decades have witnessed an extremely significant phenomenon in Chinese cultural and intellectual life outside Communist China: the revival of Confucianism. This movement, which is about thirty years old, has been called "New Confucianism". The basic work of one of its founders, T'ang Chün-i's *The Value of the Spirit of Chinese Culture*, appeared in 1951, and "A Manifesto for a Re-Appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture" signed by four of its founders was published in 1957.¹ Nevertheless, it is so far not well known in Western sinology, and the works of its originators, published in Chinese, remain untranslated into Western languages.²

In this context Tu Wei-ming's book *Humanity and Self-Cultivation* (Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1979) is of special interest. Tu Wei-ming who lives and teaches in the USA, is himself one of the important New Confucian thinkers and identifies with the Confucian tradition which he sees as a religious philosophy concentrated mainly on the notion of self-cultivation and its practical character. At the same time he is familiar with modern Western philosophy, and his remarks and observations whenever he compares Confucian philosophy with some streams of modern Western thought are extremely valuable and to the point.

The book under review is a collection of articles published by Tu Wei-ming during the 70-s in various magazines and periodicals. The first part, entitled "Classical Confucian Ideas", deals with ancient Confucianism. Of central importance is the second part entitled "Neo-Confucian Modes of Thinking" which contains nine of the fifteen articles published in the book. At the end of the book there are two chapters concerning modern Confucian symbolism. The reader will find running through this book several central ideas, some of which merit closer consideration.

The book as a whole can be seen as the author's response to J. Levenson's interpretation of the role of Confucian tradition in modern China. Tu Wei-ming justifiably sees in Joseph R. Levenson one of the most brilliant representatives of the school of thought which up to now plays a leading role in the Western interpretation of the Confucian heritage. Levenson considers Confucianism a dead relic of old China. According to this view, Confucian teaching was, in the beginning, both the product and the intellectual prop of a living society. However, by the 20th century it had already become a shadow treasured in the mind after the society which needed it had begun to disintegrate;³ it had played its part, and ended up "in the museum without walls" (pp. 278-279).

Tu Wei-ming takes issue with this approach. Irrespective of the weight of his arguments, it seems to be clear that the very fact that not only Tu Wei-ming but also a number of other leading Chinese thinkers, engage in a dialogue with the Confucian tradition and its creative development, disproves the idea that this tradition is dead. In the final account there is no more powerful evidence of the vitality of a tradition than the identification with it by the important thinkers of a given culture. Levenson apparently had fallen victim to the illusion widespread in the history of thought: he declared an old tradition to be dead because it had become unpopular in the past several decades. How many times in the last two to three centuries has Christianity been proclaimed dead? How many times have representatives of the Jewish enlightenment proclaimed Judaism dead? In the face of these examples I would venture to formulate a general principle to the effect that human thought is immortal, and that expressions of it which at some period seem to the majority to be buried once and for all, are capable of announcing their presence loudly and unexpectedly just at the moment when they are deemed to be shelved for good. Indeed, there are not many traditions of which it is possible to say that they are totally obsolete. If we take, for example, ancient Greek paganism as such an obsolete tradition, the claim that it is dead, sound enough as it seems now, could be disproved the moment some important ideologists or politicians identify themselves with it. Certainly the meaning of such phenomena has to be appreciated according to their real value, but the attempts of Nazi ideologists to revive Germanic pre-

Christian paganism show that such a development is not out of the question. An analogous phenomenon may be observed now in the USSR, where some underground Russophile thinkers urge a return to the old Slav paganism in order to counterbalance Christianity which is said to be steeped in a pernicious Jewish spirit and thus to provide a substitute for Marxism.

Tu Wei-ming's attitude to Confucianism may be called a creative transmission. Often enough sinologists cite Confucius' words "I transmit but do not create" (*Analects* VII, 1) as proof of the lack of creative spirit in Confucianism. Tu Wei-ming, however, removes the opposition between creation and transmission. He writes: "Since the mind of the ancients can never be reproduced, transmission in a real sense always implies an act of creativity —not creating something out of nothing,... but deepening one's self-awareness to the extent that its quality is comparable to that of the ancients" (p. 108). Tu Wei-ming insists that a transmitter is tradition-bound only in the sense that for the sake of self-knowledge he never ceases to learn from the past. "He does not assume the role of a maker not because he fails to recognize the power of creativity but because ... he refuses to cut himself off from the humanizing processes that have significantly contributed to his own maturation" (p. 51).

It is in such a manner that Tu Wei-ming apparently sees his own role. He says that his intention is not to build his own new system but to establish a dialogue with the great masters of the Confucian tradition, and he emphasizes that such an interpretation of creativity was typical for China, where the transmission of the Confucian way from past generations to future ones was seen as the highest aim. The role of such a transmitter cannot be reduced to any of the professional categories of the Western tradition. Speaking about Chu Hsi, he remarks that it would be misleading to characterize him either as a political philosopher or as a man of letters: he was never wholly engaged in politics, and scholarship, no matter how broadly conceived, was not his central concern (p. 122).

As mentioned above, Tu Wei-ming sees the Confucian Way which he strives to transmit as a religious philosophy. A number of authors who have written about Eastern religions considered Confucianism as one of them because it fulfilled a role similar to the role

of religion in the West: the classical books of Confucianism contain detailed instructions regarding the cult of ancestors, and in the Chinese empire there existed a state cult of Confucius.⁴ Tu Wei-ming clearly sees that the specific nature of the Confucian *tao* consists in its being a secular way par excellence (p. 233); he insists however on the transcendental anchorage of this way and interprets the basic Confucian virtue of humanity (*jen*) not only as human excellence, but also as a metaphysical reality. He writes that in Eastern thought there has been the realization that philosophizing is in itself a religious act, and he has coined the word “religio-philosophy” as a tentative term, meaning the inquiry into human insights by disciplined reflection for the primary purpose of spiritual self-transformation (p. 84).

One of the most important characteristics of Confucian religio-philosophy is human-relatedness. Tu Wei-ming mentions the fact that in many great spiritual traditions human-relatedness is considered detrimental to man’s religiosity. This view is accepted by many influential thinkers nowadays, and it has become almost commonplace to assume that the realization of the authentic self requires the courage of ultimate isolation. The Confucian approach, however, is fundamentally different. “It contends that sociality ... is a defining characteristic of the highest human attainment” (p. 207); man’s creativity is a powerful cosmic force, but man can become human only in the process of learning to be a sage. In this process he does not have to detach himself from the world of human relations, but, instead, to make sincere attempts to harmonize his relationships with others. “The ability to relate oneself to society at large becomes an important indicator of one’s self-cultivation”, writes Tu Wei-ming (p. 27). Confucian self-transformation, therefore, is based neither on isolated self-control, nor collective social sanction, but on what may be called “between”. It is not limited by the sphere of intellect alone: all important Confucian thinkers emphasize that it includes ultimate commitment to the Confucian Way analogous to the existential decision in the Kierkegaardian sense.

Based on this deep interpretation of the meaning of self-cultivation in Confucian tradition Tu Wei-ming comes to the conclusion that its orientation is in some aspects near to the ideas of

such modern thinkers as M. Buber, G. Marcel, M. Heidegger and P. Tillich. These are philosophers who to a certain extent represent the existentialist stream in modern philosophy. The idea of the affinity of the Confucian mode of thinking with existentialism is expressed also by Mou Tsung-san.⁵ Is it justifiable to consider existentialism as a European counterpart of Confucian “religio-philosophy”?

Alasdair MacIntyre remarks that although the characteristics of existentialism are so various that it is almost impossible to define it, there is a common feature among existentialist philosophers and writers. It is the concreteness of individual human existence as opposed to abstract schemes, systems and rationalisations of classical European philosophical tradition.⁶ Without any doubt the emphasis on the concrete reality of human life, in contradistinction to intellectual schematizations, draws existentialism in the proximity of Chinese tradition. There is, however, a feature of the mainstream of European existentialist thinking which sharply distinguishes it from the Confucian Way: it is individualistically-minded, and the centrality of human-relatedness is rather alien to it. This feature is clearly pronounced in the works of the forerunners of modern existentialism, Kirkegaard and Nietzsche; and it is even more important in the theories of Heidegger, with his emphasis on the central meaning of the categories of anxiety, dread, and death; and of Sartre with his conception of the radical liberty of the individual's existence. It is interesting to note that Sartre's promise at the end of *L'être et le néant* to treat the ethical implications of his doctrine of human reality was never fulfilled.⁷

There is, however, an existentialist thinker for whom the concept of human-relatedness is no less important than for Confucians. I have in mind Martin Buber in whose works the interrelations of I and Thou are put in the centre of philosophical reflection. The general trend of Buber's philosophical anthropology is rather near to Confucian orientation, and one can find in his books formulations almost identical with Tu Wei-ming's. This coincidence is not accidental—it is connected to some common traits of Hebrew and Confucian tradition. Indeed, the authors who try to follow the genealogy of modern existentialism point to the deep difference between the Greek sources of classical European philosophy, which go

back to Plato and Aristotle with their exaltation of theory as the highest human achievement and sweetest beatitude on the one hand, and those sources which go back to the Bible, on the other. In contradistinction to the ancient Greeks, "the Hebrew... proceeds not by the way of reason, but by the confrontation of the whole man in the fullness and violence of his passion with the unknowable and overwhelming God".⁸

Buber's relation to the Bible, as well as that of another leading representative of Jewish religious existentialism Franz Rosenzweig, is very near to the "creative transmission" which is considered by Tu Wei-ming as a Confucian synthesis of creativity and transmission. The new translation of the Bible into German by Buber and Rosenzweig is seen as one of their greatest creative achievements,⁹ and the writings of these remarkable thinkers may be described as their dialogue with the Jewish tradition in the same sense as the works of Tu Wei-ming and other New Confucianists may be called a dialogue with the tradition of Confucianism. One can also detect a historical parallel between these streams of thought. Just as the appearance of New Confucianism is to a certain extent a rediscovery of the Chinese inheritance in reaction to the self-destructive tendency that marked the beginning of 20-th century, so also a turning to Jewish religio-philosophical tradition may be considered a return to rediscovered roots after the long and intricate wanderings of the thinkers who at first followed the well-trodden track of classical European rationalism. Buber, whose culture was altogether German, succeeded in rediscovering his Hebraic inheritance after many peregrinations, and F. Rosenzweig turned to "Jewish thinking" after a profound spiritual crisis which ended with the sudden rejection of his previous decision to be baptized.

The last chapter of Tu Wei-ming's book "Confucianism: Symbol and Substance in Recent Times" (pp. 257-296) is devoted to the ideological problems of Communist China. Tu Wei-ming tries here to determine the relationship between Maoism and Confucianism. J. Levenson regarded the political upheavals of the "Cultural Revolution" as the expression of the struggle between the defendants of the heritage of Chinese culture and those who considered modernization as the most urgent task of China. In contrast, Tu Wei-ming emphasizes that the problem "red vs. expert"

is not the centre of Communist ideological discussion. Of paramount interest to him is the renewed upsurge of anti-Confucian sentiment, a phenomenon which has had its predecessors in modern Chinese intellectual history. The modern cultural iconoclasm, according to Tu Wei-ming, is connected with the belief that the quest for political self-determination requires a willingness to cast away the traditions that account for much of China's cultural heritage. It is interesting, however, that even in the ideology of avowed enemies of Confucianism one can detect a deep interest in the Confucian system. Although Tu Wei-ming admits that Maoist value-orientation is alien to the ethico-religiosity of Confucianism (p. 285), at the end of the article he expresses the hope that once the Confucian "ghosts and monsters" have been laid, a new comprehensive ideological structure will emerge (p. 291).

It seems to me that Tu Wei-ming's interpretation of the anti-Confucian struggle in Communist China lacks an important analytical element. Tu Wei-ming sees iconoclasm as a feature of modern China, but as a matter of fact iconoclasm was an inherent part of the anti-Confucian struggle of the so-called "legalist" school from the 4-th century B.C. onward. The long history of the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism in every sphere of politics and culture is marked by the Confucian striving to find integrated and holistic solutions to sociopolitical problems as opposed to the Legalist emphasis on struggle and constant mobilisation; the Confucian exaltation of self-cultivation as the most important matter and highest purpose of human life, as opposed to the Legalist approach to man as an instrument of the state; the Confucian idea of the goodness of human nature as opposed to the naturalistic thinking of the Legalists who saw in the human being an animal to be manipulated by the "stick and carrot"; finally, the Confucian high appreciation of culture as opposed to the Legalist tendency to subject culture to the strictest control with the aim of liquidating all cultural expressions that are not of use to the promotion of state ideology.

Tu Wei-ming mentions that in Communist China "the Legalist line of uniformity seems to command" (p. 289), but these words are merely an isolated sentence, and hence his description of the strug-

gle between Maoism and Confucianism is deprived of historical depth. My deep conviction is that the roots of Maoism lie not so much in foreign Marxism as in the indigenous ideas of the Fa-chia (Legalist) school which inspired totalitarian-minded politicians and political thinkers throughout the history of the Chinese empire.

The fact that the anti-Confucian campaign was accompanied by the glorification of Legalism deserves to be carefully analyzed. Certainly, it is also possible to see in it nothing more than one of the whimsical grimaces and grotesque absurdities typical of ideological campaigns in Communist China. But there may be more to it than that, to wit the self-unmasking of Chinese Communism. Indeed, to anyone who has read “The Book of Lord Shang” or “Han Fei-tzu”, the anti-human character of the Legalists’ ideas is clear enough. They are in sharp contrast to the Communist pretension of representing the most progressive kind of humanism. Only Mao’s senility explains the fact that Communist ideology, up to this time allegedly humanistic, identified with Legalism, and thus the secret of its anti-human character, so carefully kept, was disclosed. Naturally enough, the more moderate leadership which took Mao’s place, hurriedly dissociated itself from his ideological excesses.

As a final point I would like to draw attention to one of Tu Wei-ming’s interpretations which oversteps the limits of sinology. In the above-mentioned article Tu Wei-ming analyzes Levenson’s contention that Communists regard the Chinese humanist intelligentsia as “rootless cosmopolitans” (p. 261). Tu Wei-ming agrees with Levenson and explains the word “rootless” as an indication of the fact that these people are expendable, and the word “cosmopolitans” as an indication of their enormous influence throughout China. But as a matter of fact the expression “rootless cosmopolitans” is a translation of the Soviet code-word *bezrodnyie kosmopolity* used in the antisemitic campaigns of 1948-1949 as an inciting and sloganeering description of the Jewish intelligentsia.¹⁰ More probably Levenson meant to hint at a parallel between the attitude to Jews in the USSR and the attitude to the humanists in the CPR.

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¹ Cf. Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, Bookman Associates, New York, 1962, pp. 455-483.

² Cf. Th. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, p. 9.

³ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*, University of California Press, 1968, vol. 1, pp. IX-X.

⁴ Cf. John K. Shryock, *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius*, Paragon Book Reprint Corp., New York, 1966.

⁵ Cf. Mou Tsung-san, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh ti t'e-chih* (*The Features of Chinese Philosophy*), Taipei, Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1978, p. 7.

⁶ A. MacIntyre, art. 'Existentialism' in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards, vol. 3, p. 147.

⁷ F. A. Olafson, 'Sartre', *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 292.

⁸ William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, Anchor Books, New York, 1962, p. 73.

⁹ Cf. James Muilenburg, 'Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible', *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, ed. by P. A. Schilpp, Cambridge University Press, London, 1967, pp. 381-402.

¹⁰ Cf. Maurice Friedberg, 'Jewish Themes in Soviet Russian Literature', *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917*, ed. L. Kochan, O.U.P., 1978, p. 208. This antisemitic cliché is probably not a Soviet invention but was taken up from earlier, late 19th century antisemitic literature.

COLLECTED ESSAYS

(Review article)

R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY

LANCASTER, Lewis (ed.), *Prajnaparamita and Related Systems: Studies in honor of Edward Conze*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, Berkeley, Cal., 1977, pp. xvi + 451.

BALASOORIYA, S. et al (edd.), *Buddhist Studies in honour of Walpola Rahula*, London, Gordon Fraser, 1980, pp. xiii + 293, £20.—

SCHOPEN, G. (ed.), *Buddhist Studies by J. W. de Jong*, Asian Humanities Press (A Division of Lancaster-Miller Publishers), Berkeley, Calif., 1979, pp. ix + 717.

BICKERMAN, Elias, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, pt. II, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1980, pp. viii + 405, D.Fl. 160.— (vol. ix in the series *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und Urchristentums*).

PUECH, H.-CH., *En quête de la Gnose*. Vol. I *La Gnose et le Temps* (pp. xxxii + 301); vol. II *Sur l'évangile selon Thomas* (pp. 321), Paris, Gallimard, 1978.

LA BARRE, Weston, *Culture in Context*, Duke Univ. Press, 1980, pp. 338, \$19.75.

IZARD, M. et SMITH, P., *La fonction symbolique: essais d'anthropologie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1979, pp. 347.

It has been suggested more than once that collections of articles should never be reviewed, the argument being that if they are then by the same logic every journal or periodical should also have to review all other journals and periodicals. This holds true, according to the protagonists of this view, even if the editor of a *Festschrift* or Memorial Volume imposes some homogeneity on the collection. Another, and happily increasingly popular form of publication is to honour a scholar by collecting his own scattered and often seminal but almost inaccessible essays, articles and book-reviews. A large number of such volumes have appeared in recent years, and little more can be done here than to draw attention to their existence.

NUMEN XXVI (1979) reported the publication of the Malalasekera Memorial Volume which had originally been planned as a *Festschrift*. *NUMEN* XXVII (1980), p. 189, carried an obituary notice of Edward Conze (d. 1979), emphasising his undisputed authority in Prajnaparamita studies. Fortunately Conze still lived to see the homage offered to him by colleagues and former students, and edited by Lewis Lancaster assisted by Luis O. Gómez. Appropriately entitled *Prajnaparamita and Related Systems*, the twenty-three papers are a genuine contribution to scholarship, or perhaps we had better speak—with a view to the variety of methods as well as of subject-matter—of contributions in the plural: textcritical as well as comparative studies, interpretation as well as historical research. It may be unfair to single out names instead of simply reproducing the whole Table of Contents. Nevertheless, the mention of the names of L. Schmithausen, Y. Kajiyama, Leon Hurvitz, Alex Wayman, Harold Bailey, J. W. de Jong, Akira Yuyama, H. Bechert and W. B. Bollée at least provides a sample of the quality of the contributors to the volume. A bibliography of Conze's writings (books, articles, reviews, miscellaneous, plus a few "select other items") enhances the value of this *Festschrift*.

Another buddhological *Festschrift*, this time with an obvious and understandable Theravada slant, is the one offered to Walpola Rahula (b. 1907). Preacher, pamphleteer, politician and scholar, Dr. Rahula has had a multi-faceted career. In *What the Buddha Taught* (first ed. 1959) he showed himself as a propagandist of Buddhist modernism. In his collection of essays *Zen and the Taming of the Bull* (1978) he showed the openness of his wide-ranging mind. The *Studies* in his honour are an international tribute to his scholarship (though his other interests are not neglected), as is evident from the participation of André Bareau, Paul Demiéville, O. Lacombe, E. Lamotte, Miss I. B. Horner, Richard Gombrich, B. K. Matilal, Hajime Nakamura, G. Obeyesekere, K. Bhattacharya and many others. The main body of the volume is preceded by a biographical and uninhibitedly laudatory sketch (pp. vii-x) and a select bibliography (xi-xiii).

Meticulous scholarship and philological *akribia* are the hallmarks of Prof. J. W. de Jong. His studies of early and later Buddhist thought and texts ranging from Chinese Buddhism to Tantrism,

and from Pali and Sanskrit Hinayana literature to Mahayana sutras and Shastra writings, as well as his sovereign mastery of the Tibetan texts and versions have made everything he has written a classic. Prof. Gregory Schopen and the Asian Humanities Press are to be congratulated on the initiative of gathering de Jong's scattered writings in one rather colossal and hefty volume. The fact that these articles have been reproduced in facsimile (with the original pagination) is—in view of the prohibitively high cost of new typesetting—a small inconvenience considering the boon of this volume. Most of the items collected in this volume are reviews, and most of Prof. de Jong's reviews are goldmines of philological information and textual corrections. With all due gratitude to Prof. Schopen, one cannot help feeling that after duly admiring the volume the next thing to do is to rip it apart and to stick each review into the binding of the book reviewed—for no book reviewed by Prof. de Jong is complete without his review. Appendices to the volume include a list of *errata*, an index, a bibliography of Prof. de Jong's publications (pp. 663-702) during the period 1949-1977, and an index of the books reviewed.

E. Bickerman is one of the leading scholars in the field of pagan, Jewish and early Christian history in the hellenistic period. His *opera minora* rank as *majora* for every student of the period. The fact that these *minora majora* are scattered, in English, French and German, in ever so many periodicals, *Festschriften* and the like has long been deplored. The "ingathering of the dispersed" is therefore a most welcome event. Pt. I, dealing mainly though not exclusively with Jewish material of the hellenistic period has appeared some years ago. Pt. II, also devoted to studies of Judaism in the Second Temple period has just come out, and pt. III (Christianity and *Historia Religionum*) is scheduled to appear before long. Even so, some of Bickermann's seminal articles have not been reprinted. But instead of grumbling about what one has not, one should be grateful for what one has received.

Prof. Puech is the undisputed *doyen* of Gnostic and related studies. Each of his essays and articles, scattered in *annuaires*, *mélanges* etc. is a classic and remains one even if subsequently overtaken by later research (often Puech's own). The two volumes published by Gallimard are a real boon. The title of vol. i is actually

the title of one of Puech's best-known and most seminal papers, originally delivered in 1951 as a lecture at one of the well-known Eranos-meetings held annually in Ascona, but the volume deals not only with Gnosticism proper or related matters such as time, history and myth, but also with Hermetism and Neoplatonism. The second volume reflects Puech's research pre-occupations since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices. The publication of a similar collection of Puech's writings on Manichaeism has been promised and is being eagerly awaited.

Weston La Barre deservedly enjoys a reputation as a many-sided and stimulating anthropologist with an unconcealed penchant for Freudian psycho-analysis as a valid and useful tool in anthropological research. His wide-ranging contributions to sectarian cults (e.g., the American snake-handling cults); to revival viz. millenarian viz. "crisis" cults (including the late 19th cent. Ghost Dance outbreaks); to Peyote cults and to the subject of psychotropics in general; his spirited defence of the application of Freudian insights to anthropology—all these and many other qualities have made his name familiar also to students of religion. The latter may regret that his major paper "Freudian Biology, Magic and Religion" is only excerpted in the present selection ("Psychoanalysis and the Biology of Religion", pp. 269-275), and many readers will have their suspicions of both anthropology and psychoanalysis confirmed when confronted with Moses and Aaron as "snake-shamans at the court of the Pharaonic rain-king" (p. 53), but nobody will deny that La Barre is usually worth reading and that the present selection should be stimulating also to students of religion.

Symbolism, symbolisation-processes and symbol-systems have moved very much into the centre of both the social sciences and religious studies. No doubt different academic traditions have different styles of dealing with the subject, and one need but think of the German approaches, sociological as well as philosophical, from Kant to Cassirer and Tillich, Schelling and the romantics, not to speak of Weber and his successors on the one hand, and of the Anglo-American schools (cf. R. Firth, Mary Douglas, C. Geertz, R. Bellah, V. Turner, J. Skorupski, Dan Sperber) on the other. An increasing number of symposia are being devoted to the subject,

among which the Burg Wartenstein ones, sponsored by the Wenner-Grenn Foundation, are perhaps the best known. No discourse on this pivotal subject is possible at our time and age without reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss. The present volume is a tribute to the great master (b. 1908) dedicated to him in November 1978 on the occasion of his seventieth birthday by a number of anthropologists who are profoundly conscious of, and wish to testify to, “the new situation” in which discourse on symbolism finds itself since Lévi-Strauss impinged on anthropology, and on the anthropology of religion in particular, with his insights and methods. The fourteen contributions illustrate this “new situation”. Dan Sperber’s opening essay “La pensée symbolique est-elle prérationnelle?” also illustrates the long way we have travelled from the days of Lévy-Bruhl to those of Lévi-Strauss.

RJZW

POLEMICS

(Review article)

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BREUER M. (ed.), *Sefer Nizzahon Yashan: A Book of Jewish-Christian Polemics*, Bar-Ilan University Press, 1978, pp. 198 (in Hebrew).

BERGER, D., *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the NIZZAHON VETUS with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979, pp. xviii + 422 (introduction, translation, commentary, index) + 164 (critical text).

Polemical literature provides the historian of religion with the richest source material imaginable: it includes theology (*what* are the doctrines presented viz. rejected, and *how* are they presented?) and sociology (by whom and for whom are they presented? in what social situation were they formulated? are the texts intended for internal or external consumption? were they designed for apologetic and defensive or for missionary purposes? is there a soft-peddling of, or even tampering with, traditional doctrinal material as known from other sources so as to serve better the apologetic purpose? What are the differences between polemical literature produced by dominant majority religions on the one hand, and minority—possibly persecuted—groups on the other?). By a strange co-incidence one of the classics of late medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemics, the NIZZAHON VETUS (the “Older” NIZZAHON—*nizzahon* here means “polemic” and not “victory” as in Wagenseil’s Latin translation accompanying his first ed. of the text in his *Tela Ignea Satanae*, 1681, where *Sefer Nizzahon* is rendered as *Liber Victoria*) was edited, independently, twice at about the same time. But whereas Breuer is content with providing a fairly good critical text, a valuable though short introduction (20 pp.) dealing with the essential literary and textual problems, and a minimal bibliography, Berger’s *opus* is much more ambitious. He not only surveys Jewish-Christian polemic (pp. 3-37) and provides his translation

(pp. 41-230) with a detailed commentary (pp. 233-343), but also adds several Appendices, a special section on the textual problems, a very full bibliography (listing literature dealing with Jewish-Christian polemic in general and not confined to the *Nizzahon Vetus*) and plentiful indices.

Comparisons of the two critical texts are difficult because the two editors have chosen to follow different numbering systems of paragraphs though it is clear that Berger is particularly concerned with a close and first-hand analysis of the MS-evidence and has little patience for Pozuanski's conflated version (by which Breuer seems to set great store). Breuer ascribes the text to the early 14th century (France), and those familiar with this *genre littéraire* will probably prefer his competent, solid, concise and less pretentious edition. Others, wishing to read the *Nizzahon Vetus* in the wider context of the history of Jewish-Christian polemics may find Berger's book more instructive and useful, though occasionally Berger seems to miss the point. Thus the words alleged to be uttered at baptism: *offerentia Satanae* (Berger's Hebrew text p. 155; English translation pp. 219-20) receive a very long and learned commentary (p. 336). The author, well realising that the baptismal formula would hardly offer the infant, or anything else for that matter, to Satan feels uncomfortable with the text but valiantly rejects "the otherwise tempting possibility" that it might be a copyist's error for *spiritus sancti*. Needless to say that this non-possibility is anything but tempting. Breuer, given less to lengthy overwriting and shows of learning, is surely right (p. 175, n. 6) when in his usual brief and terse manner he simply notes that the Jewish polemicist must have misunderstood and hence misspelled the baptismal renunciation of the Devil (*abrenuntia* instead of *offerentia*)—in Hebrew transliteration the two words are not all that different.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JULIAN APOSTATA, herausgegeben von Richard Klein, *Wege der Forschung*, Bd. 509 — Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978, 531 p.

Like other volumes in the series *Wege der Forschung*, this one resurrects many meritorious and sometimes inaccessible publications from past scholarship. House policy dictates that all pieces must appear in German, with the unfortunate result that scholars whose native language is Italian, French, or English must read the writings of their compatriots in translation. There seems to be little point to this exercise in a volume designed for international consumption. It begins to look more and more as if the publishers of the series to which the present work belongs have not really thought through the fundamental principles of the enterprise. Scholars and students who are able to appreciate arguments that make ample use of Greek, Latin, and (in this case) Hebrew sources in the original will certainly be equipped to read the major modern languages of the discipline. It has always seemed odd that the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft has never recognized that it could provide a far more useful product if it located translators for papers written in less familiar languages and simply left those in English and the Romance languages in their original state. It is good to have Kent's important article on the Julianic coinage available here, but it scarcely needed to be put into German. On the other hand, an immensely valuable contribution on Julian and the Jews by H. J. Lewy—at this point in the history of Julianic research far more worth having than Adler's piece from 1893—has been omitted. Lewy's work is available only in modern Hebrew (in his *'Olamot Nifgashim*), and accordingly a German translation would have been highly desirable. Instead we have Adler's excellent but ancient study laboriously turned into German and printed with extensive quotations in Hebrew that is untranslated. This makes no sense at all.

Another weakness of the series which impairs the usefulness of the volume on Julian is the absence of any annotation to indicate what may have been disproved or superseded in the reprinted articles. Recent work in several quarters has put it beyond doubt that Libanius' phrase (*Orat.* 24.6) about the person who hurled the fatal spear that ended Julian's life has been correctly transmitted (*Ταῖηνός τις*). It is Greek for one of the *ῥαγγάε* (as they were known in Syriac), the Arab nomads. Yet on page 45

Adler's note stands as a trap for the unwary: "Die Stelle (quoted verbatim) kann zur Zeit nicht in Frage kommen; denn sie ist sicher verderbt, da handschriftlich hinter *τρωσσας* unleserliche Buchstaben überliefert sind". It is irresponsible for an editor to leave his readers so unenlightened. To turn to another illustration of the same kind, the editor has chosen to include in his volume the article by W. R. Chalmers from 1960 on the sources for Julian's Persian campaign. This article marked a real advance when it appeared, but it has itself now been overtaken by later work, which has refined and improved his hypotheses. At issue is the question of Ammianus' use of a Greek source, Eunapius or conceivably Oribasius. This possibility offers an attractive explanation of the relation of Zosimus' third book to the narrative of Ammianus. And if it was Eunapius that Ammianus used, a fresh assumption is required about the date of publication of the first edition of Eunapius' history. All of this has been discussed in detail in recent years by François Paschoud and T. D. Barnes with their work culminating in Paschoud's splendid new Budé edition of Zosimus, and Barnes' study of the sources of the *Historia Augusta* (*Collection Latomus*, no. 155, published in 1978). I discussed the problems to some extent myself in a contribution to the Lausanne colloquium of 1976 on *Gibbon et Rome*. What is the point of translating Chalmers into German to mislead those innocents who had never troubled to read him in English and presumably know nothing of Paschoud and Barnes? Once again this makes no sense.

In these days scholarly activity in the Julianic period is far too brisk to accommodate a mausoleum that enshrines the already cold relics of the past. Even the bibliography, which might have helped to show initiates the more recent controversies and (one hopes) progress, is inadequate for the purpose. It shows every sign of having been compiled by reference work, presumably in *L'année philologique*, rather than by close familiarity with the scholarly literature. Works that do not actually mention Julian or the major sources in the title are largely omitted, and there is carelessness besides. On page 519 one finds the following entry: "N. A. S. Levine: The Caesares of Julian. A historical study, Diss. University New York 1968". There is, of course, a New York University; but it happens that this dissertation was written at Columbia University. It is available only through University Microfilms (Ann Arbor, Michigan). The entry in the bibliography is therefore useless. Furthermore, there are no entries at all for Lewy or Paschoud; and, if dissertations are to be included, we ought certainly to have Javier Arce's *Estudios sobre las fuentes literarias, epigráficas y numismáticas para la historia del emperador Fl. C. Juliano* (Granada, 1975).

The many controversies that have long attended discussions of the career of Julian surface occasionally in the pieces assembled by Richard

Klein. In 1893 Adler began his important study of Julian and the Jews with the observation that in all of world history there were few figures about whom there were such widely divergent opinions. Kurt Latte, who is represented twice in this volume, opened his paper of 1928 with remarks about the love and hate, equally passionate, which Julian provoked from his own time to this. Latte noted rightly, "Es scheint, als ob noch heute der Staub des Kampfes, den er geführt hat, uns verwehrt, die Umrisse seiner Gestalt klar zu sehen". But the dust of battle has settled placidly over the pages of this collection of papers, even though it is swirling still in contemporary historical writing. It is a pity that Klein has not done something to call attention to the conflict. Only in a long and interesting contribution by Gerhard Wirth, which is the one new article in the volume, is there some hint of current debate. Of Robert Browning's biography *The Emperor Julian* he says (on p. 491) it is "ansprechende Darstellung, lässt aber eine Grundlinie vermissen. Auch fehlt Auseinandersetzung mit Quellen und Forschung". Browning's biography was one of three to appear in the last five years, and each has led to *Auseinandersetzung*. Guy Sabbah has commented lately (*Latomus* 39 [1980], 489-491) on the explosion of interest in Julian in a review of a new and valuable book of original essays assembled by R. Braun and J. Richter under the title *L'empereur Julien: de l'histoire à la légende* (Paris, 1978). Sabbah describes Browning's work as giving the classic portrait of Julian, my own as being more critical. This is fair enough, although I should not wish to say that Julian was anything other than a reactionary (as Sabbah implies I say). Historians have trouble with Julian precisely because he was both a revolutionary and a reactionary.

It is impossible to say with certainty what Julian was really like or what his ultimate aims really were. Much of the argument turns on close analysis of the sources, and the Klein volume is so out of date as to be of no help in the current debate. Instead we have echoes of the old nineteenth-century romantic view of Julian. Klein himself, on the very first page of his introduction, speaks darkly about "das Ausserordentliche und Rätselhafte der Erscheinung Julians..., die... von einem Hauch des Tragischen umgeben ist". Even Wirth declares in his first paragraph, "Sein früher Tod und das Scheitern seiner hochfliegenden Pläne gestalten eine Tragik". It seems difficult for classical scholars to contemplate the tragedy that might have befallen mankind if Julian had actually prevailed—what the impact of his educational policy would have been and what devastation would have been caused by his effort to tear asunder the fabric of late antique culture in which both paganism and Christianity were intertwined.

One of the most fruitful developments in the study of Julian has been the increased attention given to the Syriac invectives of Ephraem of Nisibis soon after the emperor's death. Ephraem devoted four elaborate hymns to this theme and was himself present when Julian's body was brought outside Nisibis on the way to burial in Tarsus. His testimony has at least as much claim as that of other contemporaries; yet Klein refers to him perfunctorily in his introduction, and with one exception none of the authors whose writings are reproduced in the volume refers to him at all. In fact, Gilliard's article on the date of Julian's birth presupposes his own prior analysis of the famous bull coinage of the emperor in *JRS* 54 (1964), 135-141. The fullest evidence on the subject, apart from the coins themselves, is not Socrates (3.17) or Sozomen (5.19) who both describe coins different from those that survive, but Ephraem, Julian's contemporary, who wrote at length on the bull coinage in his first invective (16-19). Gilliard had argued that the bull meant that Julian had been born under the astrological sign of Taurus, but Ephraem connects the image unequivocally with Julian's attempt to win over the Jews: the circumcised ones saw the image of the bull and recognized in it the golden calf. In section 17 Ephraem wrote, "The bull of paganism, which was engraved in his heart, he struck in that image (on the coins) for the people who loved him (the Jews)". What is meant exactly by "the bull of paganism" is not altogether clear (the Apis bull, Mithras' bull?), but the link with the Jews certainly is. Any interpretation of the coinage must come to grips with this text. In section 18 Ephraem goes on to identify Julian himself with the bull: "The king of the Greeks was suddenly a bull".

Ephraem's view of Julian's death would have been worth citing at the end of Wirth's paper, which suggests persuasively that Julian, recognizing the hopelessness of the Persian expedition, deliberately courted death by going unarmed into battle: "Dass er dies am letzten Tage tat, lässt vermuten, dies könne nur in voller Absicht geschehen sein". In his third hymn of invective against Julian, Ephraem wrote, "And when he saw that his gods were blamed and put to shame and that he could neither conquer nor escape...he chose (*gēbā*) death in order to be set free in the underworld" (section 16).

Another Syriac source which has recently had a considerable impact upon Julianic studies figures nowhere in Klein's volume, not even in his introduction or bibliography. In the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 108 (1976), 103-107 Sebastian Brock announced the discovery of a manuscript with the complete text of a letter purportedly written by Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem on the geological disturbances at the time of Julian's attempt to have the temple rebuilt. The Syriac text was then published in the *Bulletin*

of the *School of Oriental and African Studies* 40/2 (1977), 267-286. It is a document of exceptional interest, naming (among other things) over twenty cities devastated by an earthquake in Palestine. It begins unambiguously with a prefatory statement: "The letter which was sent by the holy Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, concerning the Jews when they wanted to build the temple and the earth shook and there were many prodigies and fire consumed many of them and many marvels were seen and many Christians died". Although it is unlikely that the letter is an authentic work of Cyril, there is reason to think it a production of late antiquity; and it may therefore incorporate details of potential value. If Klein was able to include a last-minute reference to Browning's biography, he ought to have found space to alert his readers to a major new text.

Archaeology has also made its contribution to current debate about Julian and his policies. There is no hint in Klein that John Travlos had argued in *Arch. Ephemeris* (1973), 218-236 that thirty-five fragments of the Parthenon discovered in 1970 and 1972 were evidence for a substantial rehabilitation of the great temple in the time of Julian. Travlos' hypothesis has now been convincingly challenged by Alison Frantz in *AJA* 83 (1979), 395-401; but it is a pity to find no encounter with this issue in a new volume from a series that calls itself *Wege der Forschung*.

In distributing the volume for review the publisher sent the following notice: "Der Forschungsband sieht es als seine Aufgabe an, die panegyrische Darstellung von Bidez etwas zurechtzurücken durch eine Auswahl von Arbeiten, die ebenso den Herrscher wie den Literaten einer kritischen Prüfung unterziehen". The lyrical prose in which Bidez wrote his biography should not be allowed to obscure his mastery of the sources and his remarkable success in presenting a cohesive portrait of the emperor. Bidez's work is still indispensable. For a more critical assessment of Julian it would have been better to commission new papers representative of controversies that are alive today (as Braun and Richter did in the volume already cited). Wirth's article is the only new one in Klein's collection, and it is worth having. But it would have been interesting to have heard also from Joachim Szidat, who is now in the process of completing an important commentary on Ammianus' treatment of Julian (cf. part I "Die Erhebung Julians", published as *Historia Einzelschrift* 31 in 1977), not to mention Jacques Fontaine and Guy Sabbah (both distinguished for their work on Ammianus). François Paschoud and T. D. Barnes could have supplied contrasting perspectives on the debate over sources, especially Eunapius. Brock might have enlarged on his discussion of the new letter attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem. Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, whose book on Julian is awaited from the Oxford University

Press, might have been persuaded to elaborate on her admiring view of Julian (cf. *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 [1979], 331-335), which forms a link with the hero-worship of Julian in the nineteenth century and in Greece today. Roger Tomlin seems to think (*Phoenix* 34 [1980], 267) that Julian had a happy married life for many years, and that although Helena was the only woman he ever knew (at least according to Libanius' testimony in *Orat.* 18. 179) he knew her very well indeed. One would certainly want to hear more about that improbable notion, which goes to the heart of the problem of Julian's personality. So many opportunities have been missed to achieve the very aim that the publishers set for their book on Julian.

Even in his survey of the story of Julian in literature in later ages Klein offers little in the way of stimulation. In his introduction he runs perfunctorily through some of the obvious names—Ibsen, Merezhkovsky, Vidal—as well as some less obvious ones, such as Felix Dahn, David Friedrich Strauss, and L. de Wohl. But there is silence on the matter of Julian's portentous impact upon Greeks of the mainland and the diaspora. We hear nothing of Rhangavis or (a really grave omission) Cavafy.

In the end there is not much to be said for this volume of essays. It seems to have been hastily compiled. Its usefulness will be limited to scholars who already know their way around Julianic scholarship and will find it convenient to have some important articles from the past in one place. The book is bound to mislead and frustrate anyone else.

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YUYAMA, AKIRA, *Systematische Übersicht über die buddhistische Sanskrit-Literatur. A Systematic Survey of Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*. Im Auftrage der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen herausgegeben von Heinz Bechert. Erster Teil: Vinaya-Texte von Akira Yuyama — Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978, 80 p. DM 20.

Der Verf., dem die buddhologische Fachwelt bereits umfangreiche Literaturangaben zum *Mahāvastu-Avadāna* (IJ XI, S. 11 ff.) sowie eine Bibliographie zu den Sanskrit-Texten des *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (Canberra 1970) verdankt, liefert mit dieser neuesten Arbeit einen weiteren, äusserst gewichtigen Beitrag zur Erfassung der buddhistischen Sanskrit-Literatur. Das Buch registriert die kanonischen Vinaya-Texte des Hīnayāna-Buddhismus, ihre Kommentare, Uebersetzungen, Bearbeitungen usw. und inauguriert als Teil I eine Reihe weiterer Bände der *Systematischen Ue-*

bersicht über die buddhistische Sanskrit-Literatur, welche Heinz Bechert im Auftrag der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen plant und herausgibt. Die vorliegende Bibliographie, die auch tibetische und chinesische Fassungen einbezieht, ordnet das Material erst nach den einzelnen Schulen, darauf nach den Vinaya-Abschnitten und zuletzt nach den Sprachen (Sanskrit, Chinesisch, Tibetisch, Tocharisch A, Tocharisch B, Khotansakisch usw.). Von Übersetzungen werden mit Ausnahme allein der japanischen Übertragungen im *Kokuyaku Issaikyo* verständlicherweise bloss solche in europäischen Sprachen gegeben. Die nach den Schulen gegliederten Einzelabschnitte erfassen der Reihe nach das Vinaya-Schrifttum der Sarvāstivādins (S. 1 ff.), der Mūlasarvāstivādins (S. 12 ff.), der Dharmaguptakas (S. 33 ff.), der Mahīśāsakas (S. 37), der Mahāsāṃghikas (S. 38 ff.), der Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins (S. 40 ff.), der Kāśyapīyas (S. 43), der Saṃmitīyas (S. 43) und schliesslich die Vinaya-Literatur unbekannter Schulen (S. 43 ff.). Der Anhang (S. 46 ff.) enthält ausgewählte bibliographische Angaben zur Vinaya-Literatur, Addenda sowie eine Liste der chinesischen und japanischen Personennamen. Es ist sehr zu wünschen, dass diesem ersten Teil bald weitere Teile der *Systematischen Uebersicht über die buddhistische Sanskrit-Literatur* nachfolgen mögen.

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SIEGFRIED LIENHARD

WELCH, Holmes — Anna SEIDEL (Ed.), *Facets of Taoism. Essays in Chinese Religion* — New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979, 302 p.

Facets of Taoism réunit la majeure partie des communications faites lors du deuxième congrès international du taoïsme, qui eut lieu en 1972, au Japon. Le long délai écoulé depuis ce congrès est dû aux nombreuses difficultés rencontrées pour la publication de ce livre, surmontées grâce à la ténacité et à l'intelligence d'A. Seidel, sans laquelle cet ouvrage n'aurait pas vu le jour.

On peut distinguer trois groupes dans ces communications: les quatre premières abordent les problèmes posés par le processus d'institutionnalisation du taoïsme; les trois suivantes concernent un taoïsme plus individuel; les deux dernières sont d'intérêt bibliographique.

L'ensemble est écrit par des spécialistes et s'adresse surtout à des spécialistes, ce qui peut provoquer quelques difficultés de lecture pour un non sinologue. Mais les sujets traités sont aussi d'un grand intérêt pour l'his-

toire des religions. Les essais publiés sur le taoïsme sont très peu nombreux, et c'est là, pour l'étude des religions, une lacune importante qui se fait sentir dans tous les travaux d'ordre général, et que *Facets of Taoism* contribue à combler.

Le premier article, dû à M. Kaltenmark, est un exposé clair et succinct de l'idéologie du *T'ai-p'ing ching*, le *Livre de la Grande Paix*; cet ouvrage difficile et touffu, date en partie du 1^{er} ou du 2^e siècle de notre ère. Il est sûr qu'il a été remanié, mais la portée des manipulations postérieures est malaisée à estimer. Il reste qu'il s'agit de l'un des textes les plus anciens du taoïsme religieux qui nous ait été conservé; en outre, il reflète certainement au moins en partie l'état d'esprit du mouvement des Cinq boisseaux de riz, dont le soulèvement fut, au début du 3^e siècle, à l'origine de la chute de la dynastie des Han, et qui avait jeté les bases, dans le Ssuchuan, d'une sorte d'Etat religieux, théocratique ou "taocratique", fondé sur l'utopie de la Grande Paix, *T'ai-p'ing*.

Les liens entre cette secte et le *T'ai-p'ing ching*, bien que fort probables, ne sont pas clairs, comme le note M. Kaltenmark. En revanche, le mouvement des Maîtres célestes revendique l'ouvrage, plusieurs textes l'attestent. Or, c'est avec ce mouvement, issu de la secte des Cinq boisseaux de riz, et encore actif aujourd'hui à Taiwan, que commence l'institutionnalisation du taoïsme. Nous sommes donc avec le *T'ai-p'ing ching* au cœur même du problème posé par le rapport entre la religion et le pouvoir ou la société, problème abordé et résolu de façons fort diverses par le taoïsme au cours de l'histoire. *Le T'ai-p'ing ching* en propose une solution originale.

T'ai-p'ing, Grande paix, signifie aussi Grande égalité: le terme *p'ing* possède les deux sens. Un autre titre du livre fait intervenir l'expression *Tung-chi*, ou *T'ung* suprême, qui éclaire celui de *T'ai-p'ing*. *Tung* est un terme qui évoque la communication, la circulation; il est souvent rapproché par les chinois d'un homophone qui signifie communiquer, traverser toute chose. L'idéal de *T'ai-p'ing*, ou de *Tung-chi*, est celui d'un état utopique et communautaire qui fait partie du fond chinois et qui évoque une harmonie parfaite. Il y a équivalence entre les idées d'harmonie (*ho*), de circulation, et de paix.

Le *T'ai-p'ing ching* est lui-même un signe d'harmonie: il est l'un de ces talismans que le ciel envoie en gage de protection et de faveur au souverain qui gouverne bien, c'est à dire qui a su établir une heureuse harmonie et une heureuse union entre le peuple, le Ciel et lui-même, ou entre les "trois Voies" (*san tao*), qui sont la Terre (qu'incarne le peuple), le Ciel et l'Homme (qu'incarne le souverain), ou encore, sur un autre registre, entre le Yin, le Yang et l'Harmonie centrale, fruit de leur interaction et source de toute vie.

Le signe que la communication est établie, que les forces de vie circulent entre les trois niveaux du cosmos, c'est précisément l'apparition du gage céleste qu'est le *T'ai-p'ing ching* (ceci réfère à toute une théorie de la justification du pouvoir de droit divin, à laquelle se rattache le *T'ai-p'ing ching*, qui faisait partie de l'arsenal des moyens de contrôle du pouvoir mis en place en Chine, et qui permettait aux devins de jouer un rôle politique). Mais l'accord ne doit pas simplement émaner d'en haut: il doit aussi venir du peuple sous forme d'avis donnés par la sagesse populaire au prince, jonction entre le Ciel et la Terre. Ce sont des thèmes fort anciens en Chine¹ qui sont ici repris et développés au profit du taoïsme.

Le système hiérarchique du cosmos et de la société dont le *T'ai-p'ing ching* esquisse le tableau, et qui doit former l'armature de l'état idéal, n'a d'autre raison d'être que de faire circuler le Souffle du *T'ai-p'ing*, qui est le Souffle primordial auquel s'origine le cosmos; c'est cette circulation harmonieuse qui doit civiliser et transformer tous les êtres. Aussi, pour le gouvernement idéal, la loi et les châtements ne sont-ils que des recours extrêmes. Le prince doit avant tout se maintenir en union avec le Souffle primordial par la méditation, être en accord avec les forces cosmiques, assurer la circulation des textes, des idées et des biens, et donner à chacun sa juste place.²

L'article suivant pose le problème de la relation du taoïsme et de l'ordre établi. Nous voyons le taoïsme allié au pouvoir contre les "superstitions populaires" et être en même temps tributaire de ces superstitions, restes de croyances anciennes (de "vieux souffles", "stale emanations", dit le chinois), ou expression d'une foi vivante où il trouve aliment.

La première question est de savoir en quoi consiste la "superstition" contre laquelle s'allient confucéens et taoïstes. Le mot n'existe pas en chinois. Celui qui est employé signifie "cultes abusifs"; nous dirions en langage moderne "cultes sauvages". Ces cultes abusifs sont qualifiés de *su*, populaires, vulgaires, et de "pervers" (*yin*, le mot chinois a la double connotation de "faussé", "déviant", et de "malfaisant").

Ils sont opposés par les taoïstes aux cultes "orthodoxes", corrects, justes: ils sont déviants par rapport à une notion de référence, dont le taoïsme est l'un des éléments. La notion d'orthodoxie, dans une religion comme le taoïsme, sans dogme arrêté, aux écoles multiples, sans repère fixe, a de quoi surprendre. Le taoïsme, au contraire du christianisme, du bouddhisme ou de l'Islam, n'est pas centré sur une grande figure; en fait, il a été constitué en "écoles", en "mouvements" (le mot secte est même imparfait en raison de la connotation de sectarisme qu'il contient), organisés autour d'un corpus de textes, ou d'un ensemble de méthodes. Certains de ces mouvements sont très fluctuants, et constituent à peine une ten-

dance à partager une terminologie semblable, ou le culte d'un maître légendaire placé au-dessus des autres. Le taoïsme le plus institutionnalisé a construit une Eglise officielle; il s'est rassemblé autour d'une liturgie et d'un corps ecclésiastique. Mais il y eut beaucoup de mouvements dont les liens avec ce taoïsme officiel sont restés bien lâches, pour ne pas dire inexistants. Si bien que la notion d'orthodoxie, quelquefois maniée comme une arme contre une école rivale, prenait essentiellement son sens dans la lutte contre les "cultes abusifs", cultes populaires, présumés déréglés et licencieux, dont l'article de R. Stein définit les caractères (p. 57). Ce sont en fait les cultes locaux, ou spontanés, aussi bien que la foi accordée naïvement à un thérapeute, à des "sorciers chamans", ou à des illuminés plus ou moins sincères; ce sont les dépenses culturelles excessives et ruineuses, les esprits omniprésents et multiformes qui accablent les fidèles de leurs exigences, les croyances passionnées et non organisées, que veulent censurer de concert taoïstes et confucianistes. C'est le dérèglement.

L'article de R. Stein montre clairement l'ambiguïté de la position des taoïstes, placés à mi-chemin entre la religion officielle et les dévotions mystiques. Le lien entre le taoïsme et le chamanisme a déjà été analysé par A. Waley;³ il subsiste nettement dans maintes pratiques courantes de cette religion: descente des esprits dans l'adepte, randonnées extatiques, font l'ordinaire des méditations de tout un courant taoïste. La différence essentielle étant que, dans le taoïsme, les pratiques sont codifiées par une tradition, en partie écrite, et parfois par une liturgie: les extases et possessions sont dirigées, et entrent dans un certain cadre qui leur dicte leur sens, et ne constituent pas des "oracles" répondant à des buts restreints; c'est le trait principal qui sépare le taoïste du medium.

Cependant, le taoïsme, religion sans frontières définies, faite de pratiques plus que de dogmes, reste ouvert aux révélations nouvelles qui lui apportent un sang neuf. C'est là l'une des failles dans la barrière qu'il a tenté de dresser entre lui et les dévotions populaires. R. Stein montre comment, malgré les déclarations et les actes d'hostilité (destructions de temples) auxquels se livrent les taoïstes contre les "cultes abusifs", souvent dans un souci évident, d'ordre économique-social, d'alliance avec le pouvoir, un "incessant mouvement dialectique" (p. 53) assurait un lien entre la foi populaire et la pratique taoïste. Ce n'est que dans la mesure où le taoïsme a laissé la porte ouverte aux révélations, à l'irruption de l'inspiration individuelle lui apportant un flux nouveau, qu'il est resté vivant.

Une confrontation avec l'article de N. Belmont, intitulé "Superstition et religion populaire dans le monde occidental",⁴ est particulièrement éclairante. L'analyse y est faite de la superstition présentée, là aussi, comme une survivance — ce qui correspond tout à fait au terme employé

par les chinois de “vieux souffle”. Pour Thomas d’Aquin, dit N. Belmont, c’est “un vice opposé par excès à la religion”, une “religion démesurée et extraordinaire”, c’est “rendre à une autre créature que Dieu le culte que l’on doit à Dieu seul, ou bien c’est rendre à Dieu un culte qu’il ne demande pas, ou d’une manière qui ne convient pas”. Nous avons exactement ici la notion de “culte abusif” que les chinois ont mise en avant. C’est, dit N. Belmont, un culte superflu, un culte indû. Les chinois emploient également, nous dit R. Stein, le terme de “dieu autre” à qui l’on rend un culte; et ceci rejoint encore une définition proposée pour la religion populaire dont N. Belmont nous entretient, qui est “l’autre religion”, faite de restes d’un système perdu (p. 69).

En somme, les grands chefs d’accusation portés contre cette religion populaire, contre laquelle combattent confucéens et taoïstes (et parfois pratiquée dans des couches non populaires, remarque R. Stein), c’est d’être une religion autre que celles qui sont admises comme références — en Chine: le taoïsme, la religion officielle, et le bouddhisme — et d’être inorganisée et dérégulée.

A ce propos, nous voudrions nous arrêter rapidement à quelques réflexions sur ce dernier point.

Le terme de *kuei-tao*, voie des démons, ou des dieux mineurs, réfère à tout un groupe de pratiques, remarque R. Stein, dont beaucoup sont fort semblables à celles du taoïsme. Et la question se pose en filigrane, tout au long de l’article, de savoir ce qui les distingue, au nom de quoi une pratique sera qualifiée de “démoniaque”, ou acceptée comme orthodoxe. R. Stein avance qu’entre les cultes populaires et les pratiques taoïstes, il n’existait “pas de différence de nature, mais seulement de degré, non de qualité, mais seulement de quantité” (p. 59). Ceci est souvent vrai du point de vue purement formel,⁵ mais est contredit par certaines remarques de R. Stein lui-même, qui note un peu plus loin que la catharsis qu’opérait la religion taoïste “rendait possible la sublimation de contenus obsessionnels”; il ajoute que les éléments qui étaient communs au *kuei-tao* et au taoïsme étaient dans le taoïsme, “sublimés et repris dans un cadre plus solide et mieux organisé”.

Par delà les ressemblances formelles, par delà aussi le fait certain que la société a tendance à condamner les pratiques religieuses non codifiées sur lesquelles elle n’a pas de contrôle, il existe une différence de fond entre les pratiques de religion populaire et celles du taoïsme dont parle R. Stein (même si les taoïstes eux-mêmes n’en sont pas clairement conscients): ces dernières entrent dans un système de croyances structuré, tandis que les autres sont “ponctuelles”. C’est, par exemple, ce qui fait la différence entre une “possession” par des esprits ou des démons, et une “révélation”

(les esprits apportent alors une doctrine), ou une “visitation” extatique, au cours de laquelle un esprit “descend” sur l’adepte, pratique courante dans le taoïsme: dans une religion organisée, ce phénomène fait partie de tout un système doctrinal, et ne se réduit pas à l’obtention d’un oracle.⁶

On peut trouver en outre une pierre de touche de la différence entre religion organisée et religion populaire dans la notion d’ascèse, de progression.⁷ Toutes les religions organisées parlent d’étapes à franchir (au moins en théorie, même si les fidèles l’oublient, et pratiquent alors cette religion à la façon “populaire”) dans une progression vers la Vérité (et ceci entraîne la mise en place d’une hiérarchie spirituelle, dont la forme dégradée est la hiérarchie ecclésiastique).

Bien sûr, ceci n’explique pas tout, et, en particulier, pas le fait que les cultes rendus au dieu du fourneau ou du sol, par exemple, sont tolérés en raison de leur caractère *familier*, comme le fait remarquer R. Stein. Ces cas là entrent dans le cadre de la dévotion “domestiquée”, codifiée, que la société connaît et ne craint pas, et qui a pris le caractère rassurant et quasi-légal de *coutumes*.

Une religion se dégrade tout naturellement en superstitions, en *disjecta membra* (“vieux souffles” — les textes taoïstes étudiés par R. Stein font abondamment état de cette dégradation, p. 63 et 65), lorsque sa structure générale et la fin vers laquelle elle tend sont oubliées. Mais elle peut rester sous forme de coutume tant qu’elle est encore familière, que ses pratiques sont contrôlées, inoffensives, et qu’elle n’est pas retournée à l’état sauvage.

Les deux articles suivants montrent la double tendance qui écartèle le taoïsme: l’une, contestataire, communautaire et mystique, si marquée dans le *T’ai-p’ing ching* qui veut instaurer le règne de l’au-delà au-dessus des puissants de ce monde; et l’autre, la tendance à l’institutionnalisation, à l’intégration dans la société, condition absolue de survie. La première tendance a fait du taoïsme un foyer ou un allié, selon les cas, de nombreux soulèvements populaires, comme celui de Sun En, auquel fait allusion l’article de H. Miyakawa. Mais ce même article nous montre le taoïsme qui, de concert avec le bouddhisme, tente de détourner le peuple de croyances superstitieuses en des phénomènes surnaturels, afin de s’attacher ces mêmes couches populaires, et, tout à la fois, pour se faire admettre par la haute société.

Puis nous assistons à une période triomphante du taoïsme: celle où K’ou Ch’ien-chih, héritier de l’idéologie du *T’ai-p’ing*, bien vu en cour, s’efforce d’instituer un état théocratique, et tente en même temps de blanchir le taoïsme de toute trace des pratiques sexuelles et orgiaques et d’effacer les relents de messianisme, qui l’apparentaient à la religion populaire, et l’entachaient si fort aux yeux du pouvoir.

Ainsi, le mouvement dialectique est double: entre le taoïsme et les couches populaires d'une part, entre le taoïsme et les dirigeants d'autre part. Soucieux de se faire accepter, le taoïsme donne des gages au pouvoir, tandis que celui-ci, à son tour, usant d'un procédé classique, admet et encourage le taoïsme afin d'en mieux contrôler les germes subversifs, et même parfois, comme c'est le cas à l'époque de K'ou Chien-chih, où l'empereur cherchait à établir une dynastie d'origine barbare, cherche à se faire avaliser en s'appuyant sur de vieilles traditions chinoises.

Ce qui fait la seconde partie de *Facets of Taoism* traite d'un aspect complémentaire de cette religion, qu'on peut appeler le taoïsme individuel, face au taoïsme institutionnel. Ce dernier est difficile à connaître en raison de la discrétion des histoires officielles qui minimisent son rôle, si bien qu'il a certainement pris une place plus importante qu'il n'y paraît dans l'histoire de la Chine, mais malaisée à évaluer. C'est tout le mérite et toute la tâche de chercheurs comme R. Stein, Miyakawa, Mather, Seidel et d'autres, que d'essayer d'éclaircir son rôle et d'en dégager les caractères.

Le taoïsme individuel est tout aussi ardu à mettre en lumière. Le cheminement de ce courant est le fait de penseurs individuels, qui ne font partie d'aucune église; isolés, leurs liens entre eux est assuré par la transmission de traditions; c'est le lien qui unit un maître à son disciple, avec cette particularité qu'il arrive qu'un disciple ait plusieurs maîtres, si bien que les lignées s'entremêlent de façon inextricable, et qu'il n'est guère possible de distinguer de véritables écoles.

Mais, au 4^e siècle, ces mouvements ont abouti, à la faveur d'une nouvelle révélation, à la formation d'une secte (au sens large du terme), dite du *Shang-ch'ing*, ou du Mao shan (du nom de la montagne qui fut son centre). C'est de cette école que nous entretient l'article de M. Strickmann.

Elle a laissé de nombreux écrits qui forment le corpus de textes homogènes le plus ancien qui nous soit parvenu. T'ao Hung-ching, le personnage autour duquel est centré cet article, fut un grand religieux érudit qui fit connaître ces écrits et ouvrit les portes de la haute société à ce mouvement.

Richement documenté et très approfondi, l'article de M. Strickmann, qui témoigne d'une très grande connaissance des textes, répond à un objectif précis: montrer la place que tenait l'alchimie dans ce mouvement, qui était essentiellement occupé de méditations visuelles, et dont on avait écrit que l'alchimie était absente. M. Strickmann ne choisit que quelques-unes des recettes de drogues diffusées par les écrits de l'école. Il y en a d'autres, et de nombreuses.

Ces recettes alchimiques n'avaient pas toutes le même objet, ni la même dignité. Les unes, dont il n'est pas question ici, étaient simplement des recettes de drogues purificatrices, qui chassaient les "trois vers", ou

permettaient de “cesser les céréales”.⁸ Les drogues supérieures sont celles qui font obtenir la libération du cadavre. Cette forme de salut est un procédé inférieur auquel recourent ceux qui n’ont pas su entièrement sublimer leur corps, et le laissent momentanément sur terre pour devenir immortels, par opposition à ceux qui s’envolent, au ciel “en plein jour”, tels Elie, avec un corps parfaitement léger et pur. Les premiers hantent les paradis terrestres, les seconds s’établissent dans des demeures célestes.

M. Strickmann propose de voir dans cette libération du cadavre un suicide rituel. Le terme de suicide mystique serait plus adéquat. Il ne faut pas oublier la dimension essentielle qui est celle de cette sorte de mort: celle d’une libération. Nous serions encline, quant à nous, à y voir le modèle d’une mort initiatique, car les textes montrent que la quête et le progrès spirituels peuvent être poursuivis après cette “mort apparente”.

L’auteur de l’article développe à ce propos une très intéressante interprétation symbolique de l’alchimie, qui s’ajoute à la réalité spirituelle de celle-ci.

Il relie en outre ce “suicide rituel” à une vision eschatologique selon laquelle la fin du monde aurait été prévue par les personnages mis en scène à une date assez proche. Pour notre part, nous sommes assez réticente sur cette interprétation trop précise du thème de l’apocalypse; celle-ci s’appuie, entre autres, sur une traduction du terme *Hou-sheng* qui semble erronée: *Hou-sheng* n’est pas, comme dans le bouddhisme, et comme le traduit M. Strickmann, le “saint à venir”, une sorte de Messie; c’est le “saint des temps postérieurs”, c’est à dire des temps éloignés des temps premiers de la révélation originelle. Et le mythe du *T’ai-p’ing* que l’on retrouve encore, lié ici à celui de la fin du monde, peut aussi être compris comme celui du retour à l’Origine, d’une “fusion apocalyptique ultime” comme dit M. Strickmann (p. 176), d’une fusion dans l’Omega. C’est une dimension de cette imagerie qui ne doit pas être oubliée, et qui est le sens profond du mythe eschatologique. Le thème de la fin du monde est constant dans l’histoire du taoïsme, se retrouve dans tous les textes de toutes les époques,⁹ et a une portée beaucoup plus vaste et signifiante que celle d’un simple prédiction toujours répétée, même si celle-ci se veut concrète. En outre, dans les textes du *Shang-ch’ing*, il s’inscrit dans une vaste réflexion sur les cycles cosmiques que l’adepte épouse et dépasse, acquérant ainsi une dimension qui est l’une des caractéristiques majeures de l’Immortel; il n’a donc, dans ce contexte, aucun caractère messianique.

M. Strickmann aborde à la fin de son article un problème ardu qui se pose à ceux qui étudient le taoïsme: comment définir ce mouvement religieux aux facettes si diverses? Quelle figure centrale lui donner, quelle pierre de touche trouver?

Pour M. Strickmann, c'est Chang Tao-ling, le patron des Maîtres célestes, qui peut jouer ce rôle; c'est avec lui que commence l' "histoire sociale" du taoïsme; à partir de lui que le taoïsme s'est constitué en mouvement religieux distinct qui se définit, non par opposition au bouddhisme ou au confucianisme, mais en antithèse à la religion populaire des "faux dieux". En somme, c'est avec lui que le taoïsme s'est institutionnalisé.

Si cette assertion est assurément intéressante et témoigne d'une observation perspicace, il est cependant difficile de la suivre jusqu'à admettre, comme le propose M. Strickmann, que ne sont "taoïstes" que ceux qui reconnaissent "la position historique" de Chang Tao-ling, car, dans le mouvement du Shang-ch'ing même dont traite son article, Chang Tao-ling et ses enseignements ne jouent qu'un rôle très mineur parmi d'autres anciens maîtres et sur le même plan qu'eux. Ce mouvement ne doit en rien à Chang Tao-ling "son autorité et son identité corporative" (p. 167). Ce critère proposé par M. Strickmann est trop étroit puisqu'il aboutirait à rejeter le mouvement du Shang-ch'ing hors du taoïsme, et supposerait une méconnaissance du rôle de ce mouvement qui a été, précisément, de faire pièce à l'Eglise institutionnalisée des Maîtres célestes, et de donner une forme organisée à une tendance très éloignée et presque opposée par l'esprit: celle des chercheurs d'immortalité.

En revanche, on ne saurait trop insister comme fait M. Strickmann et insister encore sur l'abus, l'aveuglement et l'ineptie qu'il y a à parler de taoïsme sans jamais avoir étudié les textes du Canon taoïste (ou autrement qu'à travers quelques anthologies impériales, comme certains l'ont fait), ce que font tant d'auteurs qui pontifient sur ce mouvement religieux dont ils ne connaissent que Lao tzu et Chuang tzu, lesquels n'ont avec lui pas plus de points communs que d'autres antiques écoles de pensée chinoise, comme, par exemple, celle "des Cinq éléments".

L'exposé consacré par C. L. Hou aux croyances chinoises dans les étoiles maléfiques bénéficie de la connaissance personnelle des pratiques de son pays que possède l'auteur, originaire de Taiwan. Il illustre fort bien le mélange intime, dans le taoïsme, des doctrines et des cultes représentés par une tradition scripturaire, et de croyances et de pratiques populaires transmises oralement. La frontière est parfois difficile à établir.

C. L. Hou commence en effet en décrivant deux rites. Le premier est accompli par un prêtre taoïste; celui-ci, à cette occasion, revêt le bonnet rouge qu'il porte pour les rites mineurs et qui l'apparente aux sorciers de la religion populaire. Le second, simplement conduit par le chef de famille, est un rite populaire. Les deux rites sont des sortes d'exorcismes destinés à chasser les mauvaises influences de certaines étoiles; ils sont

accomplis pour les mêmes raisons et s'adressent aux mêmes démons. La différence essentielle qui les sépare, comme le note l'auteur de l'article, réside dans une mise en scène plus importante dans les cas du rite taoïste; aussi y a-t-on recours dans les cas graves. C'est là une réflexion qui rejoint la conception moderne de la thérapie, dont l'efficacité serait tributaire de sa force suggestive, conception moderne qui a conduit, remarquons le, à réviser les idées existantes sur la "sorcellerie" et les superstitions.

L'article de C. L. Hou est consacré particulièrement à l'étude des croyances relatives à trois corps célestes d'influence maléfique: T'ai-sui (la Grande année), le Tigre blanc et le Chien céleste. Pour chacune, l'auteur décrit les croyances et les pratiques modernes, puis en retrace l'évolution dans le passé.

T'ai-sui est la planète Jupiter, emblème du printemps et de l'est, puissante protectrice des armées dans le panthéon impérial. Ce fut d'abord son "ombre", c'est à dire le point opposé à celui où se trouvait la planète, qui devint maléfique, ce qui revient à dire que l'astre avait une double face. Plus tard, il fut identifié à cette ombre.

Le Tigre blanc, selon le système classique des cinq Eléments, est l'emblème de l'automne, de l'ouest, du déclin et de la mort. Pour les astronomes, c'est une constellation composée de sept étoiles qui préside aux châtiments et protège l'armée. C. L. Hou émet l'hypothèse d'une origine non chinoise du mythe du Tigre blanc, antérieure aux sources écrites dont nous disposons; il serait alors l'incarnation d'un héros fondateur de tribus du sud de la Chine. Dans la religion populaire moderne, le Tigre blanc est un astre de mort, ennemi des mariages, des naissances, des embryons et des enfants, et assoiffé de sang.

Le Chien céleste exerce à peu près la même influence néfaste que le Tigre blanc; il est pareillement sanguinaire et tout contact doit être évité avec lui lors des naissances, des mariages et des enterrements. Initialement, c'était une comète dont l'apparition s'accompagnait de terribles calamités. Il prit peu à peu la forme d'un démon incarnant, entre autres fléaux, les fonctionnaires cruels.

Ces trois figures présentent, à travers l'analyse pratiquée par C. L. Hou, une double nature jouant sur un plan double. Elles seraient l'incarnation de l'autorité et du pouvoir: vues du point de vue officiel, elles incarneraient la puissance de cette autorité; ce sont alors des corps célestes, dont l'influence s'exerce sur les affaires administratives et politiques, et qui, selon les cas, peuvent être bien ou malfaisantes. Vues par le peuple, ce ne serait plus que des démons maléfiques; leur origine céleste est oubliée; ils interviennent dans les affaires individuelles et incarnent parfois les fonctionnaires cruels.

D'autre part, ces astres participent fondamentalement de la conception chinoise d'un espace-temps qualitatif. Concrètement, ce sont en fait des dates et des directions à éviter, selon les règles qui régissent toute l'ordonnance cosmique: ce qui va dans le sens naturel d'un astre ou du temps est faste; ce qui va dans le sens contraire est néfaste. L'accord ou l'opposition de deux entités — être humain et démon, astre ou esprit — se manifeste dans la réalité quotidienne par l'accord ou l'opposition des termes cycliques qui sont associés à ces entités et qui indiquent une date et un lieu.

En contraste avec ce taoïsme de paysans et de prêtres de villages, Y. Yoshioka nous introduit dans l'univers des moines célibataires de la secte du Ch'üan-chen, dans le monastère du Nuage blanc, à Pékin, où il résida à titre d'invité laïc de 1940 à 1946. Cette expérience est unique, et aucun des auteurs occidentaux qui ont traité de la vie monastique des taoïstes ne l'a partagée. Y. Yoshioka décrit les liens qui unissent une secte et un monastère à l'autre, les conditions et les formes de l'ordination et de l'admission dans le monastère, ainsi que la vie que les moines y mènent, partagée entre la récitation des textes sacrés l'instruction religieuse, et parfois coupée de randonnées dans les montagnes à la recherche des plantes médicinales, dans la plus pure tradition taoïste. Tout ceci suivant le rythme naturel des jours et des nuits, puisqu'aucune lumière artificielle n'est utilisée.

Ce monastère conservait à cette époque l'édition du Canon taoïste datant des Ming, à partir de laquelle ont pu être photocopiées et diffusées les éditions actuelles de ce canon, sans lesquelles aucune étude des textes taoïstes ne serait possible.

C'est de la formation de ce Canon, précisément, que nous entretient N. Ofuchi, analysant sa mise en forme progressive, au fur et à mesure de la prise de conscience de corps des taoïstes, et d'un travail de compilation souvent ordonné par les empereurs.

Le dernier article est également d'intérêt bibliographique: il est consacré à l'histoire des études taoïstes au Japon, dont il donne une bonne bibliographie.

Chacun des articles de *Facets of Taoism* est le fruit de plusieurs années d'études. Chacun, centré sur un point ou un aspect particulier du taoïsme, est si riche en informations que nous n'avons pu en donner ici qu'une des nombreuses lectures possibles. Ce livre contribuera à donner du taoïsme une image plus complexe et moins superficielle que celle qui prévaut actuellement dans les ouvrages sur la question, qui ne font, la plupart du temps, que se répéter indéfiniment. Il est une frappante illustration de la richesse de cette religion aux aspects si divers qu'aucune définition satis-

faisante n'en a encore été trouvée, au point qu'on peut se demander s'il ne faudrait pas parler *des* taoïsmes plutôt que *du* taoïsme.

Nous espérons que d'autres études semblables complèteront celle-ci peu à peu, bien que nous sachions que ces recherches sont longues et difficiles.

I. ROBINET

¹ Voir le thème du droit de remontrance ou de réprimande dans M. Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, Paris 1958, I, p. 79-80.

² La justification de l'ordonnance hiérarchisée de la société par l'attribution à chacun de sa juste place est un thème confucéen.

³ Voir l'Introduction à A. Waley, *The Nine Songs, A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*, G. Allen and Unwin, Londres, 1956.

⁴ Dans: *La fonction symbolique, Essais d'anthropologie* réunis par M. Izard et P. Smith, Gallimard, Paris 1979, pp. 53-70.

⁵ Encore que, si les pratiques des Maîtres célestes étaient fort semblables sur le plan formel à celles de la religion populaire, celles de Ko Hung, et celles du taoïsme auquel s'est converti Chou Tzu-liang, dont parle R. Stein, étaient assez différentes.

⁶ Cf. dans l'article de R. Stein, p. 66: ce sont en fait les oracles que condamnent les taoïstes (révélation du futur, demande d'un "bonheur", consultation sur des points divers).

⁷ Et c'est cette notion de progression qui évite à une pratique d'être stérilement obsessionnelle.

⁸ Les trois vers sont trois principes malfaisants qui vivent dans le corps humain et travaillent à sa mort; "cesser les céréales", c'est cesser de manger les céréales qui sont l'aliment le plus nuisible à l'immortalité. Voir H. Maspero, *Le Taoïsme et les religions chinoises*, Gallimard, Paris 1971, pp. 366-369.

⁹ Et de toutes les religions. Témoin ce chant de la liturgie catholique: "Libera me Domine de nocte aeterna, in die illa tremenda. Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra, Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem".

O'FLAHERTY, WENDY DONIGER (ed.), *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979, xiii + 290 p. \$16.—.

The nature of "sacred" texts; the way their sacredness is conceived, dogmatically verbalised and functionally appropriated in diverse religious traditions; the relationship between text, commentary, tradition, interpretation and re-interpretation (and the legitimations of these processes), as well as the confrontation of traditional modes of studying sacred texts with what is supposed to be the modern "critical" study—all these undoubtedly merit a careful analysis that goes beyond the earlier descriptive accounts (cf. G. Lanczkowski, *Heilige Schriften*, 1956 or the valuable and insightful joint volume of J. Leipoldt and S. Morenz, *Heilige Schriften*, 1953). Yet the book under review is a sad disappointment—for two

reasons: the title raises unreasonably high hopes, and the 13 chapters (divided in three sections: O.T., N.T., and "Other Traditions"), though each and every one first-rate, leave the reader frustrated. The result is that we have excellent articles by leading scholars summing up the state of affairs in their respective fields, some authors tackling general problems and others very specific ones ("The Book of Hosea", "The Synoptic Problem"). Some contributions shed much light on, and illustrate the procedures of, textual criticism (e.g., by dealing with medieval Hebrew philosophic mss. or with a famous and controversial treatise on canon law) but have nothing whatever to do with "sacred scripture". There is no discussion of what constitutes sacred scripture (would the "critical study" of the Talmud, the Zohar, or the Confucian canon fall within the purview of the volume?), and—even more regrettably—there is no attempt to come to grips with the problem of the "western" character of the current version of the notion of the critical study of texts. What is the difference between critical textual study in western academia (including Divinity Schools) and e.g. the claim of certain conservative Muslim apologists to the effect that Islam, with its traditional methods of examining the reliability of an *isnad*, "really invented" critical historical scholarship? Even the critical study of eastern scriptures cannot deny its western inspiration. Some very radical challenges to the received "critical" wisdom have either been overlooked or mentioned too briefly (cf. e.g., the challenges posed by the papers of M. Greenberg and S. Talmon in the Proceedings of the Congress of O. T. Studies held in Göttingen in 1977). The chapters by J. M. Kitagawa and Paul Ricœur do not make up for the volume's one-sidedness, which is not mitigated by Birger Pearson's chapter on Gnostic Hermeneutics. What about the Vedic Scriptures, the Koran, or the Sacred Book *par excellence*, the Sikh Granth? Or are these latter not yet ripe for a western summing-up of their "critical study"? Though most chapters in the volume are, as has been noted before, of equal excellence, Lewis Lancaster's "Buddhist Literature: its Canons, Scribes, and Editors" is perhaps the most fascinating and thought-provoking precisely because it highlights, by means of one case study, the wealth of material waiting to be covered in a future volume which would not be focussing (as the present one *de facto* does) merely on the Old and New Testaments of the Jewish and Christian Bible.

RJZW

GRUENWALD, ITHAMAR, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGAJU, 14 — Leiden-Köln, Brill, 1980, XII + 251 p.

Sous le nom collectif de littérature des Hekhalot (palais divins) on groupe une série de textes hébreux, qui nous conservent une grande partie des traditions ésotériques et mystiques du Judaïsme de l'Antiquité tardive (c'est-à-dire des périodes michnaïque et talmudique). Dans cet ouvrage, le professeur Gruenwald, de l'Université de Tel Aviv et l'un des meilleurs spécialistes en ce domaine, nous offre la première introduction détaillée à cette littérature.

Il analyse ainsi les différents textes des Hekhalot, tels que les *Hekhalot Zutreti*, ou mineurs, et *Rabbati*, ou majeurs, le *Sefer ha-Hekhalot* (communément appelé *III Enoch*), les fragments de l'étrange *Shi'ur Qomah*, qui donnent les dimensions cosmiques du corps divin, ou encore le *Sefer ha-Razim* (livre des Secrets), ouvrage franchement magique. Ces différents traités sont considérés par Gruenwald comme étant des "manuels pour mystiques", indiquant les techniques préparatoires nécessaires à la vision de la Merkavah, du chariot divin d'Ezéchiel I. Cette vision, donc, est d'ordre mystique — même si, souvent, nos textes donnent l'impression de témoigner d'un stade de décadence, où les techniques l'emportent parfois sur le but dernier du mystique: la contemplation des réalités divines. La toute première mention du *ma'asseh merkavah* (Michna *Hagiga* II, 1) impose d'ailleurs des restrictions sévères à l'enseignement de ces doctrines, impliquant qu'elles étaient l'apanage de groupes restreints, et d'un caractère ésotérique.

Cette étude sera donc, avant tout, d'une grande utilité pour les chercheurs dans divers domaines voisins, qui n'ont en général l'aide, pour aborder ces textes difficiles, ni de traductions, ni même d'éditions critiques. (Gruenwald lui-même a donné, il y a quelques années, une excellente édition des *Visions d'Ezéchiel*, l'un des plus anciens de ces textes). Les plus sérieuses difficultés méthodologiques, cependant, auxquelles se heurte la recherche, proviennent sans doute du manque de témoignages corroborant de l'extérieur la date des différentes couches de cette littérature, permettant ainsi d'apprécier plus justement son influence sur la mystique juive postérieure. Pour confronter ces difficultés, Gruenwald propose, dans la première partie de l'ouvrage, une étude génétique des thèmes centraux de la "mystique de la Merkavah", en partant des textes bibliques, et en s'attardant surtout sur la littérature apocalyptique. Plus précisément, il voit dans les thèmes de visions célestes, de révélation des secrets cosmologiques ou de la *Himmelreise* qui apparaissent dans divers ouvrages apocryphes (et en particulier dans *I Enoch*), les ancêtres des thè-

mes centraux du *ma'asseh merkavah*. Ces thèmes se retrouvent dans les doxologies angéliques de la liturgie de l'époque du deuxième Temple (comme l'a fait remarquer D. Flusser) et dans certains écrits de Qumrân (en particulier dans la liturgie angélique publiée par J. Strugnell). Gruenwald note que les visions mystiques chez Ezéchiel le Tragédien ou chez Philon, qui n'appartiennent certes pas à la Merkavah, reflètent toutefois la même sensibilité. Il reprend ici certains des thèmes qu'il avait déjà abordés dans une étude précédente ("Knowledge and Vision", *Israel Oriental Studies* 3 [1973]), en particulier sur la connaissance (*da'at*) et le salut dans l'apocalyptique juive, arguant qu'il s'agit là d'une des contributions centrales du Judaïsme à la cristallisation de la gnose. Gruenwald ne cède toutefois pas, comme le fait Scholem, à la tentation de voir dans la littérature de la Merkavah une sorte de "gnose juive orthodoxe", et insiste à juste titre sur les différences essentielles entre cette littérature et les textes gnostiques.

Pour définir l'expérience religieuse centrale attestée par la *merkavah*, il opte résolument pour le terme de mysticisme. Pour lui, il ne s'agit pas plus ici de théurgie ou de magie que de gnose. L'historien des religions trouvera peut-être que ces différents termes ne sont pas toujours définis avec autant de précision qu'il serait utile. Plusieurs siècles séparent en effet les expériences que relate *I Enoch* de celles décrites dans les *hekhalot*. Pour essayer de situer plus précisément ces dernières, peut-être pourrait-on faire appel de façon plus systématique à d'autres témoins de la même époque, sinon du même milieu culturel. Les incantations (*shiroṭ*) du mystique, décrites par les *hekhalot*, par exemple, ont leur parallèle dans les *epaoidiai* (copte *shlël*) des textes gnostiques et manichéens, ainsi que des papyri magiques.

Ces derniers offrent, me semble-t-il, un parallèle remarquable, et dont on n'a jusqu'à présent pas tiré parti, d'un terme clef de la littérature des *hekhalot*. Le processus par lequel le mystique s'approche de la *merkavah* est en effet décrit comme une *descente*, et cette métaphore étrange reste inexpliquée (cf. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* [New York, 1965²], p. 20 et n. 1; voir cependant les remarques de J. Dan, *J.J.S.* 17 (1966), p. 75) et celles de Gruenwald, in *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*, A. Schalit Memorial Volume (Jérusalem, 1980), pp. 479-481 (en hébreu). Or, il me semble qu'il peut s'agir d'un calque linguistique du concept de *katabasis*. Dans le culte de certaines religions hellénistiques à mystères, la "descente à l'Hadès" semble avoir joué un rôle important; ce terme est repris par certains papyri magiques grecs, qui décrivent la *katabasis* comme un rite préparatoire à l'expérience de vision mystique (voir l'analyse d'un tel rite faite tout récemment par H.-D. Betz,

dans *History of Religions* 19 [1980], pp. 287-295). La possibilité d'un tel calque est renforcée par le fait qu'à côté de son sens original ("descendre"), *yrd* peut aussi signifier "entrer" en hébreu michnaïque (voir, exemple parmi d'autres, *Bikkourim* 3, 1). L'existence d'un tel calque ne serait certes pas le premier indice de certains liens entre ces deux corpus, mais elle accentuerait l'importance qu'il faut leur accorder.

Gruenwald note que l'ésotérisme de ces textes n'implique aucune dissidence: il ne s'agit en aucune façon d'une littérature hérétique; c'est à l'intérieur même des cercles rabbiniques que semblent se recruter les mystiques de la *merkavah*. On peut noter ici qu'une telle situation ne se retrouve pas dans le Christianisme, où la réaction au gnosticisme entraîne souvent (l'exception la plus notable étant celle des Alexandrins, Clément et Origène à sa suite) le rejet des traditions ésotériques, identifiées avec la gnose hérétique. Ce fait explique peut-être qu'on ne trouve pas, dans la littérature patristique, de parallèle aux *hekhalot*.

Il n'est toutefois pas exclu que certaines traditions mystiques sur la vision de Dieu aient survécu, de façon plus ou moins souterraine, dans quelques milieux chrétiens. Certains indices laissent supposer, par exemple, que l'"anthropomorphisme" typique de milieux monastiques égyptiens du quatrième siècle, loin d'être "naïf", révèle plutôt l'existence de traditions mystiques précises sur le Corps de Dieu, proches de celles du *shi'ur qomah* (voir par exemple Cassien, *Coll.* X, 2, qui mentionne les plus exemplaires et les plus savants des moines comme tenant de cet anthropomorphisme).

Le Professeur Saul Liebermann ajoute deux appendices à l'ouvrage. Dans l'un d'eux, il démontre que l'origine du nom de Métraton, l'Ange de la Face, est à chercher dans le concept hellénistique de *synthronos*. Ici encore, la recherche comparée, qui commence à peine, nous amènera peut-être des surprises. Dans l'un des fragments du *Shi'ur Qomah*, par exemple, Métraton est dit avoir deux noms: l'un, exotérique, en six lettres, et l'autre, secret, en vingt-quatre (p. 39b Mussajoff). Or exactement la même chose est dite du nom de Jésus par Marc le Gnostique (Irénée, *Adv. Haer.* I.15.1)!

Par ces quelques exemples, j'ai voulu montrer à quel point la littérature défrichée par I. Gruenwald se situe au confluent de plusieurs des courants spirituels de l'Antiquité tardive. Son ouvrage comble une lacune importante, et ne saurait être ignoré par les historiens des religions. On peut regretter l'absence d'un *index locorum*, qui en aurait facilité la consultation.

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TUCCI, G., *The Religions of Tibet* — London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, xvi + 340 p., £8.95.

HEISSIG, W., *The Religions of Mongolia* — London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, xii + 146 p., £7.50.

In a review-article in *NUMEN* (vol. XXVI, 1979) mention was made of the many "History of Religions" series published in recent years in America and Europe, including Germany (*ibid.* p. 250). One of the most ambitious series is that published in Germany by Kohlhammer, and some of their volumes (e.g., the two volumes on Indian religions by Prof. J. Gonda) have established themselves, immediately on their appearance, as standard works. One volume in this series was devoted to *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei* (1970) and co-authored by Professors Tucci (Tibet) and Heissig (Mongolia). Books in English on Mongolian religion are not too plentiful (or, to be more exact, hardly exist), whereas the Tibetan ground is fairly well-covered—from Waddell to the translated Alexandra David-Neel to Charles Bell to D. Snellgrove to the translated Rolf Stein and others. But even there the emphasis tended to be on Buddhism (Lamaism, Tantrism etc.) rather than on non- or pre-Buddhist things, unlike e.g. H. Hoffmann's *Die Religionen Tibets* (note the plural which, as in Tucci's title, clearly proclaims the intention to include indigenous shamanism and the Bonpo religion).

Prof. Tucci, already known to English readers from translations of some of his other works, is undoubtedly the "nestor" and *doyen* of Tibetan studies today, and his *Die Religionen Tibets* deserved to be known in English as the most recent and up-to-date account of the subject. Heissig's account of Mongolia similarly pays equal attention to Buddhism, original shamanism (and its suppression by Lamaism), and the Mongolian folk-religion and its pantheon. Messrs. Routledge and Kegan Paul should be congratulated on their initiative in publishing translations of the German (in Tucci's case Italian/German) original, and, moreover for publishing these accounts not in one hefty volume but in two well-produced and convenient-to-handle books.

RJZW

CHRONICLE AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Specialised symposia, colloquia and workshops are taking place in such numbers that it is wellnigh impossible to keep track of them. Very often the fact that they are taking, or have taken, place is known only to the initiated i.e., the specialist participants themselves. How many students of religion and mythology, or even of Indian religion for that matter, knew about the 1978 Harvard Conference on “Radha and the Divine Consort”? They will come to know about it after the publication of the Conference Papers. In fact, the wider public hears about conferences and symposia only when the proceedings appear in book form. Hence our section “Books Received” is, at least in part, also a Chronicle of Events.

One of the themes that increasingly arouses interest, not least because of its relevance to the analysis of processes of secularisation and/or modernisation is that of “implicit religion”. Already three “Consultations on Implicit Religion” have been held in Britain. The fourth is scheduled for May 1981 and the fifth for May 1982. Those interested in the subject and in the list of papers presented on those occasions should contact the Rev. Dr. E. Bailey, Winterbourne Rectory, Bristol BS1 1JQ, Great Britain.

The *Nihon Shūkyō Gakkai* (Japanese Society for the Study of Religion) has celebrated its 50th anniversary at its last meeting, 20-22 October, 1980. A Jubilee Volume *Fifty Years of Nihon Shūkyō Gakkai* (pp. 181 and many photographs) was published in honour of the occasion. The Japanese Society, which also publishes *Shūkyō Kenkyū* (“Studies in Religion”)—precisely because of its large membership and qualitative strength—is showing signs of increasing concern with the problem of the unity of a *Religionswissenschaft* that is exposed to increasing specialisation, differentiation, fragmentation and what may be called “interdisciplinary alienation”.

IABS (The International Assoc. of Buddhist Studies), an Affiliate of the IAHR, is holding its 4th Annual Conference at Madison, Wisconsin (U.S.A.), 7-9 August, 1981. It is expected that H. H.

the Dalai Lama will be in Madison for the period of the Conference.

The next World Congress of Sociology is scheduled to take place in Mexico City, 15-20 August, 1982. The Congress theme will be "Sociological Theory and Social Practice", but there will be 36 additional symposia organised in five main groups. Members of the IAHR will be especially interested in the sessions organised by the "Research Committee for the Sociology of Religion". Information can be obtained from the Committee's Secretary, Dr. J. A. Beckford, Dept. of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Durham, (Elvet Riverside, New Elvet, Durham DH1 3JT, Great Britain).

The journal *Religion*, edited from the University of Lancaster and published until 1980 by Routledge & Kegan Paul, will henceforth be published—with changes in format, frequency and editorial pattern—by Academic Press Inc. (24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DX, Great Britain). The first decennium of the journal was brought to a festive close with a number honouring Prof. Geoffrey Parrinder who, at the age of 70, is now the "grand old man" of the study of religion in Britain and to whom also the IAHR wishes to extend congratulations and good wishes. The last number of *Religion* under the old dispensation also contains a useful index for the years 1971-1980.

RJZW

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE 'GOD-FEARERS'

A. T. KRAABEL

I

It is notoriously difficult to comprehend what happens when one religious tradition comes in contact with another. The problem arises first of all from the fact that we approach such a confluence either from one tradition or from the other. In the West, at least, we usually lack a paradigm which may equally and fairly include both. When the examples come from the ancient world, the problems are compounded; not only are the sources incomplete, but modern prejudices and presuppositions often get in the way. Such misreadings may distort our perception of the ancient traditions themselves, as well as of the effects of their meeting. This paper explores one instance in which such a serious misreading of the evidence has taken place.¹

For many years we have had an image of those Gentiles who stood at the intersection of *Judaism* and *Greco-Roman piety* in the classical world; they are called the "God-fearers." In 1962 the classicists' primary reference work, *Pauly-Wissowa*, distinguished God-fearers from proselytes (= converts). The God-fearers are more numerous: "they frequent the services of the synagogue, they are monotheists in the biblical sense, and they participate in some of the ceremonial requirements of the Law, but they have not moved to full conversion to Judaism through circumcision. They are called...*sebomenoi* or *phoboumenoi ton theon*."² The *Encyclopedia Judaica* in 1971 stated that "in the Diaspora there was an increasing number, perhaps millions by the first century, of *sebomenoi* (...God-fearers), gentiles who had not gone the whole route towards conversion."³

For Michael Avi-Yonah these God-fearers were a "numerous class" of Gentiles under the Empire; "although most of them did not feel able to shoulder the whole burden of the Law, they sympathized with Judaism...They were to be found in the provinces as

well as in Italy, even at Rome...As they often belonged to the upper classes, their mere presence added in the eyes of the authorities to the weight of Jewish influence..."⁴ (1976).

David Flusser wrote in 1976 that the existence of these "many God-fearers" reveals that "Hellenistic Judaism had almost succeeded in making Judaism a world religion in the literal sense of the words."⁵ Martin Hengel agrees with Flusser on the number and influence of the God-fearers, but draws different conclusions: "the large number of [God-fearers] standing between Judaism and paganism in the New Testament period...shows the indissoluble dilemma of the Jewish religion in ancient times. As it could not break free from its nationalist roots among the people, it had to stoop to constant and ultimately untenable compromises" (1975).⁶

The reference to New Testament times is not out of place, because the best-known God-fearer is a Roman soldier who eventually becomes a Christian, the centurion Cornelius of chapter 10 of the *Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament. Indeed, it is Acts which has always provided the canonical picture of the God-fearer; the authors cited above rely on these eleven verses in Acts: 10: 2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26 (where the operative word is *phoboumenos/oī*) and 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7 (which have some form of *sebomenos*). No other clear references are found in the rest of the New Testament.⁷

In the traditional reconstruction of the historical situation, the characteristics of the God-fearer are as follows:

- 1) They are gentiles interested in Judaism, but not converts = proselytes; the men are not circumcised.
- 2) They are found in some numbers in the synagogues of the Diaspora, from Asia Minor to Rome.
- 3) The God-fearer as traditionally understood is particularly significant for students of the New Testament and early Christianity; it was from the ranks of the God-fearers that Christianity supposedly had recruited a great number of its first members.

The evidence which produced this picture of the God-fearer was overwhelmingly literary; Acts provided the initial description, and to it were added isolated references from classical literature and Greek and Latin inscriptions. Always the *technical terms* were drawn from Luke, the author of the Gospel and of Acts. These are

phoboumenos and *sebomenos*, which appear in Acts, and *theosebes*, which was thought to be a variant of the latter term. (The last is an adjective, common in the inscriptions, which occurs only once in the New Testament, in John 9:31.) The other scattered evidence for Diaspora God-fearers, in Greek and Latin literature and inscriptions, is all held together by the *locus classicus*, Acts. It was argued that literary texts and inscriptions in which any of these words (*or the Latin equivalent*) was found were in fact using them in a technical sense, = God-fearer. Finally, rabbinic discussions of sympathizers and proselytes, and of conversion, were brought in. That completed a picture which most scholars adopted, particularly on the Continent, less so in Britain.⁸

II

But another part of the picture has recently materialized; since the Second World War the archaeological evidence for Diaspora Judaism under the Roman Empire has increased substantially. Well-preserved ancient synagogues were discovered at Ostia, the port of Rome, in 1961 and at Sardis in western Asia Minor in 1962. Substantial collections of Jewish inscriptions, papyri and artifacts are now in print, along with detailed studies of Jews in the Roman east at Dura Europus, in North Africa, in Alexandria and in Rome itself. Excavation continues on the synagogue of Stobi in Yugoslavia.⁹

By now enough information has become available to permit fairly detailed reconstructions of Jewish life in the Diaspora which are based *entirely* on archaeological evidence.

This new evidence broadens the older picture considerably. For earlier reconstructions of the Judaism of the Roman Empire, archaeological data were very limited; historians and exegetes were forced to rely almost entirely on literary evidence, the bulk of it rabbinic. But the direct relevance of rabbinic sources to western Diaspora Judaism is questionable; at the least, they needed to be filled out with other information as it becomes available. The archaeological evidence is particularly useful for this purpose, since it is of equal antiquity with the rabbinic literature and has the added advantage of coming directly from Diaspora sites. Further, it comes

from the Jews themselves, rather than from Gentile comments about them; Stern's recent re-editing of the relevant Greek and Latin texts from pagan authors offers many examples of how partial and distorted that "outside" evidence could be.¹⁰ And as we shall see, the use of Christian literature, particularly Acts, as direct evidence for Diaspora *Jewish* history is also plagued with difficulty.

The archaeological evidence I have drawn upon comes from six excavated synagogues of the Roman Diaspora; ordered from east to west, the ancient cities which contained them are as follows:

Dura Europos in Syria: the building is second century CE to 256.

Sardis in Asia Minor: second or third century CE to 616.

Priene in Asia Minor: third or fourth century?

Delos, on an island in the Aegean Sea: first century BCE to second century CE.

Stobi in Macedonia: fourth century. Earlier synagogues third century or before?

Ostia in Italy: fourth century. Earlier synagogue first century?

The dates are approximate except for those indicating the fall of Dura (256) and of Sardis (616). The Dura and Sardis buildings were extensively remodelled during their history. The earlier synagogues at Stobi and Ostia are attested in the excavated evidence; they were supplanted by the later buildings.

Much more evidence from Diaspora Judaism is available, of course, from random epitaphs to papyri to gems. But recall that the God-fearers are associated with *synagogues*, with organized Diaspora Jewish communities. They are substantial groups of people, not isolated individuals.¹¹ They are found at the center of Judaism, not at the fringe. If they are to be identified archaeologically anywhere, it would be in association with the excavated buildings.

I have reviewed the evidence from these six buildings and for related sites in a recent survey article, and refer the reader to it and its bibliography for details.¹² What is presented in this paper is chiefly conclusions. A thorough study of this evidence reveals:

1) The synagogue inscriptions—over 100 of them—never use the term *phoboumenos* or *sebomenos*. *Theosebes* appears perhaps 10 times, but as an adjective describing Jews, usually Jewish donors. (The God-fearers, for all their interest in Judaism, are not Jews.)¹³

2) There are no other references in the inscriptions which would suggest the presence of interested but non-converted Gentiles in the buildings in which the inscriptions were placed. If we had only the synagogue inscriptions as evidence, there would be nothing to suggest that such a thing as a God-fearer had ever existed.

3) The symbolism used in the buildings is directed toward the Jewish community, with no apparent attempt to communicate with persons who come from outside this tradition. The evidence from Dura is best known in this regard, but other sites make the same impression.

4) The functions of the synagogues need also to be considered. Each is probably the only building owned by the city's Jewish community, and is the center of its religious and social life; as such it is more significant for its community than any synagogue in Palestine might have been. It is not accidental that at least four of these six were dominated by a Torah Shrine; their importance as *Jewish* centers is paramount.

5) Contact with Christians is rare, though such contact is assumed to be common from the accounts in Acts. To judge from the material remains, the gentile world in which these Diaspora Jews lived is considerably more pagan than Christian. In third-century Dura the synagogue is much more elaborate than the Christian building. The Stobi synagogue is displaced by a church building, but not before the fifth century; and two synagogues had been erected in Stobi before that. And at Sardis there is no archaeological evidence for a significant impact by Christianity on Jews at any point in Late Antiquity.

To summarize: the terms in question do not occur in the synagogue inscriptions. There is nothing in the excavated buildings to suggest the presence of a kind of Gentile "penumbra" around the Diaspora synagogue communities. There is no hint in these data that these Jews are reaching toward their Gentile neighbors with any sort of religious message.

If interested Gentiles in some numbers had been an accepted part of Diaspora synagogue life, something should have shown up in the excavations. To this date, nothing has.

III

These results from archaeology prompt a re-investigation of the older literary evidence. It quickly becomes apparent that Acts is the key. The most vivid descriptions of God-fearers are based on this book. We would not know the term "God-fearer" if it were not for Acts. The other evidence commonly used—epigraphy, and literature both classical and rabbinic—is almost always "explained" with reference to Acts.¹⁴

But recent studies of Acts are revealing the extent to which it is first of all a literary composition—or, perhaps, theology in narrative form—rather than an historical record.¹⁵ Luke's concern is to tell an edifying story of the way Christianity began. His revisionist treatment of Paul is the best known example of this element in his writing; neither the theology¹⁶ of Paul nor the chronology¹⁷ of his career, as found in Acts, can be made to line up with the Pauline epistles.

New Testament redaction criticism has provided many other examples of Luke's alteration and amplification of his sources, in the service of the story he wishes to tell. His way of presenting Christianity is narrative. For too long he has been taken as an historian in the modern sense; a distorted picture of the religious situation of the first century has been the result.

Luke's literary creativity served the best of purposes; but at the same time it requires us to be cautious in attempts to use Acts as an historical source, *especially* when conclusions from Acts are not independently supported by other evidence.¹⁸

Put the suggestions of the literary critics together with the archaeological data, and the function of some major elements in the plot of Acts becomes immediately apparent:

1) The theme of "missionary preaching in the Diaspora synagogues"—The word *synagoge* is used in Acts chiefly to designate the place where Diaspora Christian missionary preaching begins; with one exception (Apollos, 18:26) Paul is the synagogue preacher. After his Conversion (9:1-19) Paul's first act (as the "Apostle to the Gentiles"!) is to preach in a synagogue (9:20). This is particularly striking in view of the fact that the term *synagoge* is not used once in the letters written by Paul. Luke's point is clear: Christianity's path to the Gentiles was through the Jews.

2) The hero "Cornelius the God-fearer"—Cornelius, whose story is told in 10:1-11:18, is the first God-fearer met in Acts; three of the eleven references to God-fearers in Acts are found in this story. And Cornelius is the *best* kind of Gentile! He is a Roman citizen and an army officer. He prays to God *dia pantos*. He is pious, and so is the soldier who assists him. He has the full approval of the Jews. Most important, his conversion is accomplished at the direct command of God through a vision to Cornelius himself and a triple vision to Peter. A chapter and a half of Acts is devoted to the story of Cornelius. After him, no other God-fearer in Acts is given as much as a single sentence of description. Only two others are even named: one is Titius Justus (18:7), the other—in line with another of Luke's emphases—is a woman, Lydia (16:14). But Cornelius is the archetype; he *defines* the God-fearer for Acts. When other God-fearers are brought in after chapter 10, we know about them already; they are like Cornelius. The Lukan pattern has been clarified further: the path to the Gentiles through the Jews was also through that *tertium quid*, the God-fearer.

3) "The three programmatic renunciations of the Jews"—When Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, becomes a Christian missionary, he immediately begins his work in a synagogue. Then the Cornelius story makes Paul's work legitimate via Peter. But almost immediately there is a strain on this procedure, and it is caused by the Diaspora Jews. Luke's Paul is provoked into three formal and programmatic renunciations of (Diaspora) Jews in favor of a mission to the Gentiles. These statements are set in three major zones of the Gentile world, in progression toward the west: 13:46 in Asia Minor, 18:6 in Greece and 28:28 in Rome.¹⁹

The first Renunciation (13:46)²⁰ takes place in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, among Jews and God-fearers. The final break with the Diaspora synagogue is at 19:9 in Ephesus, when Paul withdraws from the most Jewish of teaching sites, the synagogue, to the most Gentile, the *scholē*. But this break is anticipated in Corinth in the second Renunciation (18:6),²¹ which is followed immediately by the last reference in Acts to a God-fearer (18:7). After nine more chapters in which no God-fearers are mentioned and no one enters a synagogue, the third formal Renunciation of the Jews occurs at 28:28;²² two verses later, Acts ends.

4) “The disappearance of the God-fearers”—the God-fearers disappear altogether, rather than coming to the fore, when Paul withdraws from the synagogue. After 19:9 Paul spends two years each in Ephesus, Caesaria (Cornelius!?) and Rome, but they never appear again as the faith is spread in these Gentile cities. It is no accident that we have no more God-fearers after 18:7 and no more “going into the synagogues” after 19:8; these two themes go together, and after 19:9 neither one has any further use.

The God-fearers are on the stage as needed, off the stage after they have served their purpose in the plot.²³ Acts cannot be used as evidence that there ever were such groups in the synagogues of the Roman Empire.

It is a tribute to Luke’s dramatic ability that they have become so alive for the later Church, but the evidence from Paul’s own letters and now from archaeology makes their historicity questionable in the extreme.²⁴

But since I have questioned the historical value of this part of Acts, I have the obligation to say what more important point Luke was trying to make with this theme. I suspect that with his references to *synagogues* and *God-fearers* Luke is trying to tell both good news and bad news. The bad news is that most Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora have rejected Christianity despite the missionaries’ repeated efforts; this is part of the point of the three formal renunciations in 13:46, 18:6, and 28:28 with their Old Testament proof-texts. Luke has concluded that the time has passed when Jews in some numbers might be expected to come into the new religion.

The good news is symbolized by the God-fearers, the Gentiles whom the Jews had begun to attract before Christianity came on the scene. Thanks to Peter and especially to Paul, these Gentiles came *into Christianity* in far greater numbers. Christianity is becoming more and more a Gentile religion; that outreach to the Gentiles is legitimated by the “existence” of the God-fearers, examples of an earlier outreach to Gentiles by the Jews.

The God-fearers are a symbol to help Luke show how Christianity had become a Gentile religion *legitimately* and without losing its Old Testament roots. The Jewish mission to Gentiles recalled in

the God-fearers is ample precedent for the far more extensive mission to Gentiles which Christianity had in fact undertaken with such success. Once that point has been made, Luke can let the God-fearers disappear from his story.²⁵ That is just what they do, and that is why there is no further reference to them in the New Testament and no clear independent record of them in the material evidence from the classical world.

IV

Perhaps it can not be demonstrated conclusively that there never was a circle of God-fearers associated with ancient Judaism. The hypothesis of this paper is rather that, at least for the Roman Diaspora, the evidence presently available is far from convincing proof for the existence of such a class of Gentiles as traditionally defined by the assumptions of the secondary literature.

The new evidence required to falsify this hypothesis would have to be substantial; one clear inscription using the term *phoboumenos* or *sebomenos* precisely as in Acts would be helpful, but not sufficient, since at most it might prove God-fearers for that particular synagogue community.²⁶

Consider a parallel example, the Christian Gnostics: they are a slippery group; despite a substantial amount of ancient evidence, the social location and the various forms of this piety remain difficult to define. They were self-admittedly, perhaps by choice, a small fraction of that tiny minority of the first- and second-century world called Christians.²⁷ By some accounts cited here, e.g. the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, the population of God-fearers in the Roman world at that time would have been higher than the number of Christian Gnostics. It does not seem unreasonable to expect something comparable in substance to the kind of evidence which was available for Christian Gnostics before the Nag Hammadi discoveries, before we place some faith in the existence of another social group of perhaps comparable size.

There are important implications of the hypothesis of this paper for the history of Christianity and of Judaism; to begin with Christianity:

1) The distance between Palestinian Jewish Christianity and Diaspora Jewish Christianity has probably been over-stressed by

earlier scholarship, for the first century at least. They did not exist in sealed compartments. Movement back and forth between Diaspora and Holy Land was not difficult. Christianity could reach the Diaspora directly via Jewish Christian missionaries; the God-fearer is not needed as a go-between.

2) The percentage of Jews in the Christianity of the late first and early second centuries may have been higher than is usually assumed. But these Jewish Christians spoke the religious language of the Diaspora well because more and more they were *Diaspora* Jews, e.g. Paul of Tarsus; the first expansion of Christianity in the Gentile world is perhaps due more to them, and less to *Gentile* Christians than we usually admit.

3) Acts' straight-line picture of the expansion of Christianity runs: Jew — God-fearer — Gentile. But that is a simplified version, for the purposes of Luke's story. Rather, Christianity expanded over a broad front; it used several religious "languages" at the same time — with inevitable internal conflicts, attested as early as Paul's letters.

For the history of Judaism

1) The figure of the God-fearer has often been used to demonstrate the inadequacy of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period, what Hengel termed its stooping "to constant and ultimately untenable compromises" in order to make a place for itself in an alien world. But the New Testament provides no evidence for such failure, if the God-fearer texts are properly understood.²⁸

2) When this understanding of Acts is coupled with the new evidence from excavations, we conclude that the Jews of these synagogue communities need not have felt alien to the Diaspora; we need not assume that they were "never really at home" there. At Stobi Jews were "at home" for generations, constructing a series of synagogues for their community; it was only at the end that Christianity became strong enough to change things for the worse. The assaults which destroyed the Dura synagogue in the middle of the third century fell no less heavily on Gentile buildings. The Ostia evidence is incomplete but nothing suggests either a ghetto there, or a ghetto-mentality.

But the clearest example of a Jewish minority "at home" in a Gentile world is Sardis. This community was a very old one. Generations of Sardis Jews were native Anatolians, not refugees, immigrants or slaves from the troubled lands farther east. By the time the synagogue and the city were sacked by the Persians in the seventh century the Jews had lived there for nearly a millennium, perhaps more; and almost from the beginning they apparently enjoyed some standing with the various Gentile authorities.²⁹

3) Missionary activity conducted from these synagogues³⁰ may have been much less extensive than was once thought to be the case. The only reference to a *proselyte* in the New Testament outside Acts³¹ is Mt 23:15: the scribes and Pharisees "traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes one [they] make him twice as much a child of hell as" themselves. The polemic of the verse is obvious (nothing similar appears in the parallel texts of the other two Synoptic gospels); in the absence of other evidence from the Roman Diaspora, it is of little or no value for the reconstruction of the historical situation.

4) In the past we have surely exaggerated the control of one segment of ancient world-Judaism over another. Almost as soon as there was a "diaspora," Judaism in the west began to develop in parallel with the older communities of Syria-Palestine and farther east;³² each had its local alliances, its own social organization and to some degree its own theology.

5) But at the same time this does not mean that those in Diaspora synagogue communities were Jews any less. They acted as though their form of Judaism was authentic; the burden of proof is on those who would argue that it is otherwise.

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¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented in Oxford at the *Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies* in April, 1978, and to Prof. George Caird's seminar on Acts in May, 1978; at the University of Kansas in April 1980, and at the annual meetings of the *Society of Biblical Literature* in Dallas in November, 1980. Earlier drafts were read by Caird, P. J. Cuff, T. R. W. Longstaff, Dennis Nineham,

Jerome Quinn and David Tiede; though none of these is responsible for the conclusions reached here, this essay is much the better for their help.

² K. G. Kuhn and H. Stegemann, "Proselyten," *RE*, suppl. ix (1962), 1260.

³ *Encyclopedia Judaica* 10:55, s.v. "Jewish Identity."

⁴ M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine* (Oxford, 1976) 37.

⁵ D. Flusser, "Paganism in Palestine," in *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* I.2, edd. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen, 1976) 1097.

⁶ M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia, 1975), vol. 1, p. 313.

⁷ In the past half-century the most influential treatments of this issue have been K. Lake's "Proselytes and God-fearers" in F. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity I. The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 5 (London, 1933), 74-96, and the extended note to Acts 13:16 in H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1924), 715-723. More recent studies: L. H. Feldman, "Jewish 'Sympathizers' in Classical Literature and Inscriptions," *TAPA* 81 (1950) 200-208. R. Markus, "The Sebomenoi in Josephus," *JSS* 14 (1952) 247-250. Kuhn and Stegemann, "Proselyten," 1248-1283. K. Romaniuk, "Die 'Gottesfürchtigen' im Neuen Testament," *Aegyptus* 44 (1964) 66-91. H. Bellen, Συναγωγή τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ Θεοσεβῶν... *JAUC* 8/9 (1965/6), 171-176. B. Lifshitz, "Du nouveau sur les 'Sympathisants'," *JSJ* 1 (1970) 77-84. F. Siegert, "Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten," *JSJ* 4 (1973) 109-164. H. Hommel, "Juden und Christen im kaiserzeitlichen Milet...", *Istanb. Mitt.* 25 (1975) 167-195. M. Wilcox, "The 'God-fearers' in Acts: A Reconsideration," *Journal for the Study of the N. T.* 13 (Oct. 1981) 102-22.

⁸ See the commentaries to Acts and the standard histories of the New Testament period. Translations of Acts which conflated the two Greek terms appear to be one source of the problem, to judge from the research presently being conducted by Paul F. Stuehnenberg (Ancient Studies, University of Minnesota) into the medieval and later understanding of the God-fearer.

⁹ A. T. Kraabel, "The Diaspora Synagogue: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.19 (1979) 477-510; and "Social Systems of Six Diaspora Synagogues," in J. Gutmann, ed. *Ancient Synagogues: The Current State of Research*, forthcoming; A. T. Kraabel and E. M. Meyers, "Archaeology, Iconography and Non-Literary Written Remains," chapter 9 of *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters*, edd. R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, vol. II of *The Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. D. A. Knight, forthcoming.

¹⁰ M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism I* (Jerusalem, 1974). See also E. N. Lane, "Sabazius and the Jews in Valerius Maximus: A Re-examination," *JRS* 69 (1979) 35-38, cf. A. T. Kraabel, "Paganism and Judaism: The Sardis Evidence," in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme... Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon*, edd. A. Benoit, M. Philonenko, C. Vogel (Strasbourg, 1978) 25-31.

¹¹ This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. There is no lack of evidence, e.g. magical papyri and gems, for individual instances of the conflation of Jewish and pagan pieties by gentiles or Jews about whom nothing else is known. But in the standard reconstructions, the God-fearers are a substantial social sub-class; the existence of such a group cannot be proved with scattered gems or charms, rarely if ever associated with excavated synagogues, indeed usually lacking any clear social context whatever.

¹² Kraabel, "Diaspora Synagogue" (see above, note 9).

¹³ Generally B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Cahiers de la RB 7; Paris, 1967).

¹⁴ And arguments for the historical value of these elements in Acts may become circular, for example: "The picture which Acts gives of Paul's visiting synagogues and preaching there has been rejected as unhistorical on the ground that, by Paul's own account, his apostleship was specifically to the Gentiles, not to the Jews (Gal. i.16, ii.7-9; Rom xi. 13f.). But the apostle to the Gentiles was a sufficiently good strategist to know that he could find an excellent bridgehead for the discharge of his commission in the God-fearing Gentiles who attended synagogue worship in the cities of the Diaspora," F. F. Bruce, "Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?" BJRL 58 (1975-76) 293 note 2.

¹⁵ For an introduction, and further bibliography, see N. Peterson, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia, 1978) 81-92.

¹⁶ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1971) 112-116.

¹⁷ R. Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia, 1979) 7-24.

¹⁸ In a chapter titled "Narrative World and Real World in Luke-Acts," Peterson argues that "the rejection of God's agents by God's people in connection with God's sanctuaries (synagogues and temple) is the plot device by which the movement of the narrative as a whole is motivated," *Literary Criticism* 83. Drawing on the parallels between Luke and Acts already identified by earlier commentators, he shows that the "narrative world" of Luke-Acts is constructed in such a way that Jesus, Peter and John, Stephen, and Paul all have the same "experience": expulsion from Temple or synagogue at the hands of "God's people," the Jews. Thus for Peterson at least themes 1 and 3 below are not peculiar to Acts but reflect major plot-lines running through the entirety of the two-volume work, Luke-Acts. Acts' picture of Paul as synagogue-preacher is central to Peterson's analysis, cf. his summary of the discrepancies between Acts and Paul's letters on this point, 82f.

¹⁹ The renunciations and the artificiality with which they are introduced into the story have been noted by many commentators, e.g. M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1956) 149f.

²⁰ "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you...behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (+ Isa 49:6).

²¹ "Your blood be upon your heads!...From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

²² (Isa 6:9f. +) "...this salvation has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

²³ With the exception of the third renunciation (28:28), all texts relevant to these four themes, and all references to the God-fearers, are found in the central third of Acts, between 9:20 and 19:9. A study of the terms for God-fearer, in connection with the other words associated closely with them in this section of Acts, will be published elsewhere.

²⁴ Luke's freedom to rewrite a part of early Christian history in this fashion surely says something about his distance from the events, that is, about the date of the writing of Acts.

²⁵ The abruptness with which they vanish is difficult to account for if the historicity of the circle of God-fearers is assumed, and even more difficult if Luke himself is thought to be a former God-fearer, as is held by M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1980) 107.

²⁶ The closest yet to such a text is the inscription from Aphrodisias in Caria to be published by Joyce Reynolds, cf. M. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," AJA 81 (1977) 306; the term it uses is *theosebēs*. At the least, this text is evidence for

(from?) a Jewish community in Aphrodisias, one which probably had a place of meeting, i.e. a synagogue. More tantalizing but much less helpful for reconstructing the life of Diaspora Jews are inscriptions such as IG III² 13209, 13210 = SIG 1239 (from Athens) and SIG 1240 (from Chalcis in Euboea), in which curses resembling those in Deut 28:22, 28 are used to protect the graves of well-to-do sophists of the second century; for a recent study of the possible connections, see L. Robert, "Malédiction funéraires grecques," CRAI (1978) 241-289, especially 241-252.

²⁷ Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* I.24.6 on Basileides, cf. *Gospel of Thomas*, logion 23.

²⁸ If Paul's contemporary, Philo of Alexandria, had been previously unknown and the *de Vita Mosis* or the *Legum Allegoria* were suddenly to be discovered in 1980, their author would inevitably be called a God-fearer; the traditional understanding of Diaspora Judaism would have no place for such a *Jew*.

²⁹ On Sardis: Kraabel, "Diaspora Synagogue," 483-488; C. Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, Monograph 4; Cambridge, 1976), both with further bibliography.

³⁰ See D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief: Studien zur religiösen Propaganda in den Spätantike* (WMANT 11; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1964) 83-187, especially 83-137.

³¹ In Acts the term occurs three times, at 2:11 and 6:5, and in a notorious *crux interpretum* at 13:43. Logical inconsistencies resulting from the use of the New Testament to define Diaspora Judaism are of course not new; that striking history-of-religions category, the "semi-proselyte," was also the product of an uncritical reliance on the God-fearer texts in Acts, cf. Strack-Billerbeck (note 7 above) *ad* Acts 13:16.

³² Thanks to the work of Jacob Neusner and his students the particularity of the rabbinic world view has taken on a new vividness and detail in the last two decades; see e.g. his "The History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some New Approaches," HR 16 (1977) 216-236.

JOSEPHUS' USE OF *HEIMARMENE* IN THE
JEWISH ANTIQUITIES XIII, 171-3

LUTHER H. MARTIN

Josephus uses the word *heimarmene* (fate, or, destiny) in but four passages in his *Jewish Antiquities*: XIII, 171-3: XVI, 397; XVIII, 12-22; and XIX, 347.¹ In two of these passages, XIII, 171-3 and XVIII, 12-22, as well as in a parallel passage in *The Jewish War* II, 162-6, he uses the issue of determinism to distinguish between the three Jewish "philosophies": the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.²

The Pharisees, according to Josephus in *Ant.* XVIII:

postulate that everything is brought about by fate (εἰμαρμένη), still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man's power, since it was God's good pleasure that there should be a fusion and that the will of man with his virtue and vice should be admitted to the council-chamber of fate.
(*Ant.* XVIII, 13)

Later, in this same passage, he characterizes the position of the Sadducees and the Essenes by contrasting them with this Pharisaic position on *heimarmene*. The Sadducees, he writes, "own no observance of any sort apart from the laws," while the Essenes "leave everything in the hands of God" (*Ant.* XVIII, 16). Josephus also refers here (*Ant.* XVIII, 11) to a parallel account in the second book of his earlier *The Jewish War*, in which he described both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in part, in terms of their contrasting attitudes towards *heimarmene*:

the Pharisees...attribute everything to Fate (εἰμαρμένη) and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action Fate (εἰμαρμένη) cooperates.... The Sadducees...do away with Fate (εἰμαρμένη) altogether.

(*Bell.* II, 162-4)

This passage from *The Jewish War* seems to clarify the description of the Sadducees which Josephus gives in the *Antiquities* XVIII, 16: In owning "no observance of any sort apart from the laws," "the Sadducees...do away with Fate."

In the brief passage on the three philosophies in *Ant.* XIII, 171-3, Josephus presents the attitude towards *heimarmene* as the single issue which distinguishes the three philosophies:

Now at this time there were three schools of thought among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of Fate (εἰμαρμένη), but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of Essenes, however, declares that Fate (εἰμαρμένη) is mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate (εἰμαρμένη), holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness.

This is the only passage in which Josephus presents the opinion of all three philosophies explicitly towards *heimarmene*. Given the singularity and centrality of his use of this term in *Ant.* XIII, 171-3, an examination of Josephus' use of this term in the *Antiquities* best might be focused upon his use of *heimarmene* in this passage.

The problems which can be focused upon this passage are essentially twofold. First, what does Josephus mean by *heimarmene*? and, why does he use so centrally a concept for which, as George Foot Moore has observed, "there was no equivalent word in Hebrew—and no corresponding conception?"³ Second, as *heimarmene* means "fate" or "destiny" in some sense, its meaning must be discussed in relation to the determinism/free will issue raised by Josephus in this passage and implied in any discussion of fate. What then is the relationship of any kind of determinism to a God in whose hands, according to Josephus, is the universe, and who is "perfect and blessed, self-sufficing and sufficing for all" and who "is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things" (*Apion* II, 190)?

Josephus' use of *heimarmene* in the historical and theological context of his description of the three Jewish "philosophies" is a problematic question not only in studies of Josephus and Hellenistic Judaism, but in the study of Hellenistic religion as a whole. The satirical writings of Lucian of Samosata, for instance, in the following century point to these issues:

This, Zeus—and I beg you by the Fates and by Destiny not to hear me with exasperation or anger when I speak the truth boldly. If...the Fates rule everything and nobody can ever change anything that they have once decreed, why do we men sacrifice to you gods and make you great offerings of cattle, praying to receive blessings from you? I really don't see what benefit we can derive from this precaution, if it is impossible for us through our prayers either to get what is bad averted or to secure any blessing whatever by the gift of the gods.

(Zeus Catechized, The Loeb Classical Library)

Satirization of such issues suggests their widespread and popular currency.

The problem of Josephus' use of *heimarmene*, therefore, can be placed in the context of two, more overriding, concerns. First, does and to what extent does Josephus' description of the Jewish philosophies reflect the broader concerns of Hellenistic religiosity? For, as W. C. van Unnik has reemphasized with respect to Josephus, "every historian...is a child of his time, and as such Josephus is a typical example of a man living in Hellenistic culture."⁴ The second, related, problem is to what extent Josephus is correct in his use of *heimarmene* to characterize and distinguish the Jewish philosophies—that is, the larger problem of the reliability of Josephus as a historian.

Ludwig Wächter has argued the essential correctness of Josephus' characterization of the three Jewish philosophies.⁵ He begins with Josephus' description of the Sadducees, who, in their strict and total adherence to the written law, completely denied *heimarmene*. It is their strict observance of written Torah alone which distinguished them from the Pharisee's observance not only of written Torah, but also of God's continuing plan in the oral tradition.

The Pharisees are described by Josephus in *Ant.* XIII, 172 as attributing certain events to the work of Fate, but not all. These latter events depend upon human actions, but under God in obedience to Torah. This relationship between Fate and God is concisely stated in *Bell.* II, 162 where Josephus reports that the Pharisees attribute everything to the parallel reality of Fate and God. As Wächter notes, however, this parallelism between Fate and God does not appear explicitly in the *Antiquities*. Nevertheless, he concludes that the relationship of determinism and free will was paradoxical for the Pharisees, and that this Pharisaic paradox continued to be distinctive of later Judaism.⁶

The Essenes, according to Wächter, followed not only Torah, but also the rules of their community. Consequently, they were distinguished from the Sadducees and the Pharisees by their practical religion. Josephus describes the Essenes variously as leaving “everything in the hands of God” (*Ant.* XVIII, 18), perhaps reflecting their own understanding, and as declaring that “Fate is the mistress of all things” (*Ant.* XIII, 172), perhaps Josephus’ perception of their strict adherence to community rule.⁷ In any case, a synopsis of these two passages does not result in the identification of Fate with God, but, as Josephus concludes of the Pharisees, in the paradoxical attribution of everything to Fate and God.

Wächter accepts the influence of the Stoic identification of *heimarmene* with God, or with the will of God, upon Josephus.⁸ He refers to *Ant.* XIX, 347 where Josephus seemingly had Agrippa conclude that fate is identical with God’s will:

I [Agrippa], a god in your eyes am now bidden to lay down my life, for fate (εἰμαρμένη) brings immediate refutation of the lying words lately addressed to me. I, who was called immortal by you, am now under the sentence of death. But I must accept my lot (πεπρωμένη) as God wills it.

Although Josephus greatly admired Agrippa,⁹ are we to accept his version of Agrippa’s view towards the role of *heimarmene* and God as Josephus’ own position? And even if we do, this text identifies the will of God with *pepromene* and not with *heimarmene* which is associated in this passage with Agrippa’s mortality. More convincingly, Wächter notes that in *Ant.* XIII, 172, Josephus describes the Essenes as accepting Fate as the “mistress of all things,” while in *Ant.* XVIII, 18, he describes this same group as “wont to leave everything in the hands of God.” This apparent identity of *heimarmene* with the will of God, at least for the Essenes, would be more convincing had it appeared in the same passage, especially in light of Josephus’ reference in his description of the Essenes in *Ant.* XVIII to his earlier description in *Bell.* II, but with no mention of this supposedly parallel passage in *Ant.* XIII. Nevertheless, Wächter concludes that the Essenes recognized God as Lord over all because His will and Fate are one and the same. Josephus used *heimarmene*, he believes, with its overtones of the determinism/free will issue current in Stoic debate, to clarify the differences between

the Jewish philosophies for his Hellenistic readers who would have little comprehension of the subtleties of Jewish theological debate.¹⁰

The understanding of certain language and concepts as borrowings from, or the influences of, Hellenistic philosophy, especially Stoicism, is an accepted tenet of much Josephus scholarship. Louis Feldman represents this position when he writes, in connection with another passage of the *Antiquities*, that "Josephus consciously colors his narrative with Stoic phraseology to make it more intelligible and attractive to his readers."¹¹ And, from the same article: "Since much of Josephus' projected audience was sympathetic to Stoicism, it is not surprising that there are a number of Stoic touches in his narrative."¹² Of course, we have Josephus' own account of his decision to govern his life "by the rules of the Pharisees," a sect, which, he informs his audience, has "points of resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school" (*Vita* 12). Since *heimarmene* is a *terminus technicus* of the Stoic philosophical tradition,¹³ can we assume the influence of this widespread philosophy in *Antiquities* XIII, 171-3, or in the parallel passages?¹⁴

Unlike the Epicureans, who, similar to Josephus' depiction of the Sadducees, rejected any view of existence which was determined (cf. *Ant.* X, 277), the Stoics harmoniously embraced the rule of Fate as the orderly principle of the universe.¹⁵ This supreme power, as Cleanthes writes in his *Hymn to Zeus*, was called by various names, whether that principle was imaged theologically as the great god Zeus, or philosophically as the central Fire first evoked by Heraclitus, or the more abstract *Logos*, or cosmologically as the World-soul, as *Physis*, or as *Heimarmene*. Thus, from the perspective of Stoic thought, Wächter's identification of *heimarmene* with God, or with *pronoia*, the will of God, in Josephus is fully justified.

However, while the central cosmic principle of Stoicism offered Hellenistic existence an understanding of a theo-philosophical order, it did so at the price of determinism. As this problem has been summarized by J. Mansfeld: "In the domain of ethics, the Stoic conception of god's fatal rule gave rise to famous perplexities regarding the evaluation of human responsibility...As a matter of fact, the Stoics were constrained to either leave some openings for human freedom at the cost of a loss in consistency in so far their general theory was concerned (sic)...or to restrict human freedom

to the sphere of our mental dispositions...”¹⁶ This Stoic constraint indeed would seem to parallel Josephus’ description of the Pharisees as believing both in Fate and God.

However, as Wächter points out, Josephus was not a philosophical thinker, but an educated story teller.¹⁷ Further, H. Attridge suggests that Josephus does not employ the themes which generally accompany philosophical discussions of fate, e.g., a strong emphasis on teleology, the regularity of nature, and the harmony of the universe.¹⁸ Consequently, we must conclude that if Josephus was influenced by Stoicism in his use of *heimarmene*, he did not use his philosophical borrowings technically, but in an extremely casual manner. If such a non-technical usage or influence were the case, it is of little value to modern interpreters to delve into the “orthodox” Stoic usages of this word. Rather, we might look to the more popular currency of this word by the first century A.D.

Heimarmene was not only a Stoic technical term, but was also a central designation of the widespread and influential Hellenistic popular astrology.¹⁹ In the cosmogony of the Poimandres, we have the *locus classicus* of the astrological identity of *heimarmene*:

God...created seven Rulers (i.e., the planets) which encircle the world perceived through the senses. Their government is called Heimarmene.

(CH I, 9)

This tractate later identifies this rule of *heimarmene* with the deterministic oppression characteristic of the anti-cosmism common to late Hellenistic Gnostic and Hermetic literature. As in Stoicism, the comforting order of celestial causation had evolved in astrology to an oppressive determinism which actively disallowed human free will. However, whereas Stoicism had compromised its deterministic view to leave openings for human freedom, the more mechanistic understanding of astrological celestial causality resulted in the dominant late Hellenistic anti-cosmism which was designated generally by the term *heimarmene*.

It is certain that Josephus was familiar with and influenced by the astrological tradition. He presents Abraham as a knowledgeable teacher of astrology to the Egyptians (*Ant.* I, 167, see also 156). This association of Abraham with astrology was widespread.²⁰ As L. Feldman observes, “The picture in the Bible (Gen. 15:5) of Abraham being told by God to look at the heavens and to count the

stars, since his offspring will be as numerous as they, together with the general view (Jos. AJ I, 168) that the Chaldeans, among whom Abraham was born, were the originators of the science of astronomy and astrology, gives rise to the picture of Abraham as the astronomer [astrologer] par excellence."²¹

Moreover, in *Ant.* III, 179-187, Josephus himself employs astrological symbolism to interpret the symbolism of the Jewish tabernacle and of the vestments of the High Priest. Thus, for example, he equates the twelve stones of the Priests' breastplate with the twelve months and the signs of the zodiac.²²

However, Josephus never uses *heimarmene* in any astrological context; but it was not necessary for him to have done so. For by his time, anti-cosmism was increasingly characteristic of popular piety, whether as a non-technical casual Stoicism, as a popular astrology, or, as a theologism to designate existence after the fall.

Paul, for example, the first-century contemporary of Josephus, seems to refer to a similar negative understanding of the world when he counsels the Galatians to renounce the weak and beggarly *stoicheia tou kosmou* which had formerly determined their lives (Gal. 4, 8-9; 4, 3; see Col. 2, 8). The reverence for the "days, and months, and seasons, and years" alluded to in this passage suggests that the deterministic *stoicheia* refer to the astrological powers of the celestial realm which were associated with the calendar and which ruled over the religious observance of this worldly existence (see Col. 2, 16).²³ In other words, the common understanding of the world by the first century was negative, whether expressed through such images as slavery under the *stoicheia tou kosmou*, or the astrological images of *heimarmene*, or otherwise.²⁴

It is this more popular sense of *heimarmene* as a generally negative designation of existence that we find in Josephus' *Antiquities*. In his discussion of Herod's domestic tragedy (*Ant.* XVI, 395-398) Josephus writes:

we are persuaded that human actions are dedicated by her [Fortune] beforehand to the necessity of taking place inevitably, and we call her Fate [*heimarmene*] on the ground that there is nothing that is not brought about by her.

(*Ant.* XVI, 397)

It is clear from this passage that Josephus accepts the popular usage of *heimarmene* as the determined governance of the human condition.

However, he immediately qualifies this statement with an observation about man's responsibility for his own actions:

Now it will, I think, suffice to compare this doctrine with that according to which we attribute some part of the cause to ourselves and hold ourselves not unaccountable for the differences in our behaviour, as has been philosophically discussed before our time in the Law.

(*Ant.* XVI, 398)

In this passage, similar the Paul's view of freedom from the deterministic powers of the cosmos in Christ (e.g., Gal. 5.1), Josephus speaks of man's responsibility for his own actions, that is, of his freedom from *heimarmene*, in his obedience to Torah (*Ant.* XVI, 398).

In *Ant.* XIII, 171, Josephus further distinguishes those under the law, the three Jewish philosophies, according to their attitude towards fate, *peri ton anthropon pragmaton* (concerning human affairs). By referring comprehensively to human as opposed to Jewish affairs (under the law), Josephus makes a universal statement which reflects the general Hellenistic "heimarmenic" view of human existence, and then gives, by contrast, the Jewish alternative of life in obedience to Torah in its various interpretations. In other words, a life of obedience to Torah offers man an alternative to the otherwise universal determinism of *heimarmene*, together with the subsequent freedom for directing, within the requirements of Torah, his own life.

Heimarmene, then, in Josephus' writings names a particular sense of human existence prior to and apart from Torah. It views human existence as deterministic, in the usual Hellenistic manner. For Josephus, freedom from this determinism, and thus human responsibility, is possible only in obedience to the will of God. His use of the term can be understood as a semantic ploy which sets up an apologetic contrast: life under and life apart from Torah. Contrasted with the universal givenness of human existence under the rule of *heimarmene* is the human will under divine law, designated by Josephus as the rule of *pronoia*, or divine providence.²⁵ Josephus strikingly summarizes his view of divine providence in the conclusion to his discussion of the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (*Ant.* X, 276-281). In this passage he contrasts God's revelations to Daniel with the Epicureans "who excludes Providence from human

life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs (πραγμάτα) or that the universe is directed by a blessed and immortal Being'' (*Ant.* X, 278).

This understanding of the use of *heimarmene* suggests a reevaluation of George Foot Moore's judgement that *Ant.* XIII, 171-3 "has no connection with the preceding (Jonathan's letter to the Lacedaemonians and the reception of his overtures) nor with the following narrative (the plans and movements of Demetrius' generals)...''²⁶ The discussion in *Ant.* XIII, 171-3 about the rule of *heimarmene* over all human affairs would seem to present a parallel contrast to the affairs of Jonathan, whose affairs are directed by the *pronoia theou* (providence of God, *Ant.* XIII, 163). Jonathan, then, exemplifying life under God and thus freedom from *heimarmene*, presents a model for Jewish initiative and freedom from *heimarmene* under Torah. *Ant.* XIII, 163ff., further, narrates how Jonathan, when he saw that by God's providence his affairs were going well, sent envoys to Rome and to Sparta. Josephus' description of the Jewish parties in *Ant.* XIII, 171-3 not only locates the Jews nicely in the international world of Romans and Greeks, but comments further upon the uniqueness of the Jews from the perspective of the various Jewish philosophies and their relation to Hellenistic thought. *Ant.* XIII, 174 then returns to an account of the actions of Demetrius' generals.

Thus, in *Ant.* XIII, 171-3, Josephus not only distinguishes between the various Jewish parties in terms of their attitude towards the law, which he presents to his Hellenistic audience through the more comprehensible terminology of *heimarmene*, but he locates also the Jewish people in an international setting with a universal problem, the relation of the Jews to the universal rule of *heimarmene* which is over all human affairs. He presents the Jews as the people who are freed from *heimarmene* by the providence of God, and who consequently exercise free will and human responsibility in and through their obedience to Torah.

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¹ In *Ant.* XVI, 397, Josephus speaks abstractly of the inevitability of Fate. In *Ant.* XIX, 347, he describes the death of Agrippa as fated. All references to Josephus will be to *Josephus*. Trans. T. St. John Thackeray, et al. The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge; Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966-1979).

² In *Ant.* XVIII, 11, Josephus refers to φιλοσοφίαι τρεῖς (so also in *Bell.* II, 119). This seems to be an attempt by Josephus to cast the varieties of Judaism into the Hellenistic category of philosophical schools. In *Ant.* XIII, 171, however, he speaks of τρεῖς αἱρέσεις τῶν Ἰουδαίων. We will speak conventionally of the three Jewish "philosophies" in referring to all passages.

³ George Foot Moore, "Fate and Free Will in the Jewish Philosophies According to Josephus," *Harvard Theological Review* XXII (1929), p. 379. Many interpreters, e.g., Gustav Stählin ("Das Schicksal im Neuen Testament und bei Josephus" in *Josephus-Studien*, ed. Otto Betz, et al. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974) have assumed an identity between Josephus' use of *pronoia* and *heimarmene*, or, have translated these and other "fate" terms both similarly and variously, thus adding to the confusion.

⁴ W. C. van Unnik, "Flavius Josephus and the Mysteries," in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*. Ed. M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 247.

⁵ Ludwig Wächter, "Die unterschiedliche Haltung der Pharisäer, Sadduzäer und Essener zur Heimarmene nach dem Bericht des Josephus," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 21 (1969), pp. 97-114.

⁶ As Rabbi Akiba is quoted: "All is foreseen and free will is given, and the world is judged by goodness; and, all is according to the amount." *Abot* 3, 19, in *Pirke Aboth*, Trans. R. Travers Herford. (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 88.

⁷ In *Vita* 10-12, Josephus tells us he studied first hand all three of the Jewish philosophies. Although he finally identified with the Pharisees, it seems fair to conclude from the amount of space he devotes to a description of the Essenes (*Bell.* II, 119-161 and *Ant.* XVIII, 18-22) in comparison with that devoted to the Pharisees and the Sadducees that his affinities may lie with them. However, for some reason, perhaps whatever he means by their position on *heimarmene*, Josephus rejected their community for the Pharisees.

⁸ Wächter, *op. cit.*, p. 113. So also Friedrich Nötscher, "Schicksal und Freiheit," *Biblica* 40 (1959), pp. 442f.; David Flusser, "Josephus on the Sadducees and Menander," *Immanuel* 7 (1977), p. 63; and Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *Le Commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 46; among others. Moore attributes the use of *heimarmene* by Josephus to his dependence upon Nicolaus of Damascus. *op. cit.*, pp. 383f.

⁹ See *Ant.* XIX, 328-331.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the determinism/free will issue in Stoicism, see A. A. Long, "Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action," in *Problems in Stoicism*. Ed. A. A. Long. (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 173-199.

¹¹ Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World: His Portrait of Solomon," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*. Ed. Elizabeth S. Florenza. (Notre Dame, 1976), p. 71.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹³ Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-379; see the study by Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*. 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 101-106.

¹⁴ David Flusser, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-67. On the other hand, Shlomo Pines argues for "A Platonic Model for Two of Josephus' Accounts of the Doctrine of the Pharisees Concerning Providence and Man's Freedom of Action," *Immanuel* 7 (1977), pp. 38-43.

¹⁵ Willy Theiler, "Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre," in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl*. (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1946) presents a survey of *tyche* and *heimarmene* in Josephus in relation to Stoic and Epicurean views of fate, pp. 38-40.

¹⁶ J. Mansfeld, "Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought," in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131f.

¹⁷ Wächter, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹⁸ Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in The Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*. (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 155-6.

¹⁹ So also Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 385; See Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greek and Romans*. (1912; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1960), pp. 84f.

²⁰ Salo Wittmeyer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. 2nd ed., vol. II: *Ancient Times*, Part II. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), pp. 16ff.

²¹ Louis H. Feldman, "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 99 (1968), p. 155.

²² Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual*, 2nd ed. (New York: KTAV, 1967), pp. 112f.; and Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel*, Vol. I. (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1957), pp. 170-3.

²³ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 204f.

²⁴ Gnostic literature, for example, is replete with imagery of this type. See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*. 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 48-97.

²⁵ As Attridge has pointed out, "In later stages of Greek philosophy, primarily as a result of the critique of Stoic fatalism by Carneades and the skeptical middle Academy, εἰμαρμένη and πρόνοια regularly designated two separate spheres of causation, and πρόνοια was seen to be the more proper term for God's activity." *op. cit.*, p. 157; see also pp. 71-76. Samuel Sandmel concludes that Philo makes this same distinction; *Philo of Alexandria*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 101.

²⁶ Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 371f.

THE MANDAEAN ṬABAHATA MASIQTA

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Introduction

In her introduction to the Mandaean texts *The Haran Gawaita and the Baptism of Hibil Ziwa*, E. S. Drower says,

...to [the Mandaean] the immutable and sacrosanct elements of his religion are the ancient rituals, baptism and the various forms of the sacramental meal. It does not worry him that there are a number of creation-stories, contradictory to one another or that there is confusion in the heterogeneous pantheon of spirits of light and darkness. What does matter is that no rule of ritual purity be broken, and that every gesture and action prescribed for ritual shall be rigidly observed.¹

That ritual commands such a central position in the Mandaean religion should come as no surprise to scholars of Gnosticism. However, the Mandaeans were—and remain—“practising Gnostics” to a degree that still baffles students of the religion. Lofty, speculative mythologies exist side by side with complex rituals. This combination challenges scholars more at ease with mythologies and with philosophical thought than with obscure ceremonials. As a result, students of Mandaicism continue (more or less tacitly) to regard the myths and the rituals as essentially unrelated. Generally, where a concern with ritual emerges, mere description and comparative interests take the lead.² Attempts to render the rituals of Mandaicism meaningful within the frameworks of the religion’s mythological thought are still scarce.

But the idea that myth and ritual go together has been a commonplace in religious studies for a long time and is surely also considered as such by the authors with which the present essay will take issue on some points. Without committing myself to exaggerated versions of the various myth-ritual theories, or claiming that the *legomenon* and the *dromenon* (to use Jane Harrison’s terminology) are everywhere and always two sides of one and the same coin, it will be argued here that the Mandaean masiqta is precisely such a case of two complementary components, the speculative and the practical, saying the same thing—each in its own language—and mutually

reinforcing one another. Thought and ritual action taken together, reveal parallel insights and goals. To this end I shall analyze part of the Mandaean *masiqta* (i.e. death mass) ceremony. According to Lady Drower,

The *masiqta* ('raising') affects the two non-material parts of a human being which survive death; the *nishimta* and the *ruha*. The *nishimta*...is pre-existent and when destiny attached it to its earthly partners, the *ruha* (spirit) and the *pagra* (body), it associates with them reluctantly and yearns for its home in the 'world of light'. The *pagra* dies and is integrated back into mother earth. The *ruha* is...swayed by emotion and strongly affected by bodily instincts and yet is drawn upwards by the *nishimta*. After purification in the after-life, the *ruha*, which is still linked to the *nishimta*, unites with it...and they rise 'as one' into the 'ether-world' or 'world of light'.³

The *masiqta*, then, focuses on the two upper elements, the spirit and the soul, for the body cannot rise. A crucial part of the *masiqta* is devoted to the joining of the spirit with the soul. The two must accompany one another in order to be incorporated into a new, celestial body (*uṣṭuna*) in the Light-world. Aside from these two goals—the joining of spirit and soul, the creation of a Light-world body—the *masiqta* has a third objective, *viz.* to incorporate the newly deceased into the community of its Mandaean ancestors in the world above.

The Mandaean priests, the ritual specialists, are able to achieve this three-fold goal. Celebrating the *masiqta* for every deceased Mandaean the priests maintain the fragile, vital connection, *laufa*, between the living and the dead. Earthly impersonators of '*uthria*,⁴ Light-beings, the priests are capable of crossing the boundaries between earth and Light-world. Thus, the priests mediate between the two realms, and only the priests' work enable laypeople (and priest-colleagues) to ascend through the hostile planetary spheres, seen as purgatories (*maṭarata*), to the Light-world.

There are several kinds of death-masses, *masqata*; they differ somewhat with respect to prayers and number of required participants.⁵ The *masiqta* presented here is the *masiqta* "of the Parents", *Ṭabahata*, which is celebrated on the last day of the five-day, intercalary period *Panja* (or: *Parwanaia*) in the spring right before the new year. A double *masiqta*,⁶ the *Ṭabahata* is performed in two parts, which I will present in three sections. My presentation relies on Drower's field-work accounts and on her editions and translations of primary Mandaean sources. Prayers, priestly

instructions, commentaries and activities will be set out in conjunction with one another so that the religious thought, imagery and ritual proceedings and exegeses can appear together.

Preliminaries

In its entirety, the masiqta takes about twelve hours.⁷ It requires elaborate preparations by the celebrants: several priests, at least one *ganzibra* (priest of high rank), and an *ašganda* (helper) who supplies the priests with the necessary materials for the ceremony. Preparatory rituals start on the day before the masiqta, i.e. two days after the death of a person. On the day of the masiqta itself, the celebrants perform minor ablutions and partake of two rituals meals.⁸ During the second meal, the priests begin to impersonate the deceased and prayers are said in his name. Spectators, laypeople, are required throughout these rituals,⁹ but the masiqta proper is performed inside the cult-hut, *mandi*, unseen by any outsider.¹⁰

But first, there are other preparations. The ganzibra, assisted by the ašganda, kills a dove outside the mandi. This ritual imitates the actions of two primordial Light-world figures who were the first to carry out a masiqta, the masiqta for Adam, the first man. Acting as the primordial Pure Ether, the ganzibra puts the dove under his foot, lays the knife against the bird's throat, and, watched by the ašganda, he says, according to *ARR*,

‘In the name of Life and the name of Knowledge-of-Life’ is being mentioned over thee! Ptahil summoneth thee and Hibil-Ziwa commandeth thy slaughter’. And then he drew the knife across the mystery of its throat and said ‘Thy flesh is pure for souls of those *masiqtas* who are called on (*by name*). With thee, Adam shall rise to the Light, and any who eat of thee shall live, be made healthful and well-established. The name of Life and the name of Knowledge-of-Life is mentioned upon thee.’¹¹

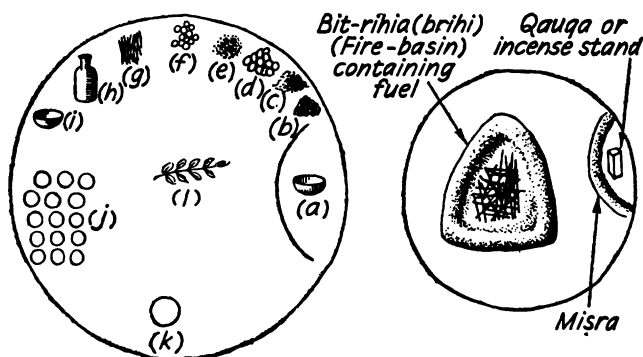
The dove, called *Ba*, symbolizes the spirit, *ruha*,¹² which is told that it will arise with the soul of Adam.¹³

Both ganzibra and ašganda immerse themselves in the river, *yardna*, after the sacrifice, and the helper even brings the bird with him into the water.¹⁴ Next, the ganzibra plucks away some of the feathers on the right side of the dove's breast, and,

...takes the knife from the *ashganda*, cuts out a piece of meat from the plucked area of the breast, roasts it in the fire, dips it in salt and shreds it into minute fragments. These are distributed later to the priests when they arrange their *tarianas* [ritual trays]. The flesh so divided is called *palga d-Ba*. The *ganzibra*

wraps the body of the dove (the *Ba*) in palm-fibre, enters the cult-hut and pushes it into the space between the roof and the northern wall, so that it will face the celebrants during the *masiqta*.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the other priests have purified themselves, prepared ritual foods, and cleansed the clay trays, the *ṭariania*, for these foods. *Faṭiria*, small, round, saltless biscuits are half-baked, and a certain number of these distributed to each priest, including the *ganzibra*. Each priest arranges his *ṭariania* with the following: a small waterbottle; a cup of *miša* (sesame-oil mixed with pounded dates); the allotted *faṭiria* (sixty, total); a drinking-bowl with four raisins; shreds of foodstuffs: *Ba*, seeds of grape, pomegranate, quince, dates, coconut, almond, walnut, and citrus; a twig of myrtle. All the trays are put inside the *mandi*. There is, in addition, a second tray, holding a fire-basin with fuel and a stand with a cube of incense. The priests, in full ritual garb, enter the *mandi* and remain there, secluded, until the end of the *masiqta*.



The two *Ṭariania* at the *Masiqta*

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| (a) <i>Hamra</i> bowl. | (g) The dove's flesh. |
| (b) | (h) The 'inner phial'. |
| (c) | (i) Cup of <i>miša</i> . |
| (d) Sacred foods. | (j) The <i>faṭiri</i> (before arrangement). |
| (e) | (k) The place where they are eventually piled. |
| (f) | (l) Myrtle. |

Figure 1: From E. S. Drower, *Water into Wine*, London: Murray, 1956, p. 250

The First part of the Masiqta: The Sixty Faṭiria

Inside the *mandi*, each celebrant stands in front of his two *ṭariania*, the one to the right representing the soul, the one to the left, the spirit.¹⁶ After reciting a prayer for the mouth-covering, *pan-*

dama,¹⁷ each priest, “takes up his ‘inner phial’ and a sprig of myrtle...and pours a little water over the four raisins in the drinking-bowl. He kneads the raisins in the water until it has become coloured. It has become *hamra*, ‘wine’.”¹⁸

While doing this, the priest utters the first prayer for the *masiqta* proper, CP 33,¹⁹ which is, in part,

In the name of the Life! Water of Life art thou! Thou art come from the Place which is life-giving and art poured forth from the House of Life. (At thy) coming, Water-of-Life, from the House of Life, the good come and refresh themselves....As water when poured out falleth on the earth, so (too) doth evil fall abashed before good. As the water falleth on the earth, so shall their sins, trespasses, follies, stumblings, and mistakes be loosed from those who love the name of Truth (*kušta*) and from the souls of this *masiqta*, and from (the souls of) our fathers, teachers, brothers and sisters who have departed the body, and those who (still) live in the body.²⁰

Water, then, is poured on the raisins like rain fertilizing the earth.²¹

Next, the priests hold aloft the incense from the right hand tray, and salute the First Life in the Light-world, saying,

Hail Yuzaṭaq, *Gnosis* of Life, Source of Life; He who unveileth the silence, giveth hope and keepeth the prayers of the spirits and souls of the righteous and believing men into the Place of Light... Pray ye from there for us and we will pray from here for you. All fruits wither; all sweet odours pass away, but not the fragrance of *Gnosis* of Life, which cometh not to an end nor passeth away for an age of ages...²²

Incense, like prayers, ascends towards the Light-world, maintaining the *laufa*. The priests, next, throw incense on the fire and waft the smoke towards the left, thus enveloping the left *ṭariana* in the fragrance. One text, *ATŠ*, explains the effect of this prayer and of the wafting,

And when ye took up the incense and ye say [CP 34] over the Mystery of the Mingling [i.e. over the water and raisins], ye give [the soul] a hand and lift her up, purify her and mingle her with the Mystery of the Water, the perfume of which invigorateth all the mysteries of the body ...²³

CP 35 follows; it includes these words towards the end, “(Though) spirits and souls sit (*here*) as guilty, (*yet*) by thy name they shall rise as innocent...”²⁴

Three long prayers, CP 75-77 follow.²⁵ The first one describes how the coming of the Light-world messenger causes joyous celebration but also wreaks havoc in the world. Even the evil powers, “sitting on thrones of rebellion,” are overpowered by the Light-forces and end up praising these.²⁶ In the same prayer, when

the words “Turn back, push back, remove and make impotent angels of wrath, frost and hail from my land and my house,”²⁷ are reached, the effect is, “then spirit and soul are estranged from hatred, envy, dissention and evil thought.”²⁸ At the very end of *CP* 75, the prayer asks for the successful establishment of the soul in the Light-world. At these words, *ATŠ* says, “soul and spirit take hands and are heartened.”²⁹

CP 76 mentions the Perfecter of Souls who furnishes the soul with a radiant garment and “a wreath of victories.”³⁰ Also, the soul’s own good works, including correct partaking in commemorative meals for the dead, will precede the soul on its way upwards and perfect it. Just as the priest will be eating for the benefit of the ascending soul, so that soul, while still in the body, ought to have eaten for the dead of his family.³¹

The foods on the *ṭariania* are illuminated at the recital of *CP* 77,³² and the effect of the formula “Union, enlargement of Life and forgiveness of sins be there for me...” at the beginning of the next prayer, *CP* 9, is: “the spirit moveth towards the soul and saith to her, rejoicing, ‘By thy life, my sister in *kušta*, this is my day of days! Mine eyes are no longer dazzled and fleshly sloth is removed from my heart.’”³³

CP 35 then reappears³⁴ and during this prayer the priest “purif[ies] [the soul’s] eyes and ears, the portals of the brain, the bones, heart and liver.”³⁵ *ARR* reminds the priest of inserting the name of the deceased in this prayer, saying, “...barred to *this soul*...of this *masiqta* is the gate of sin, and *we will* open to him the gate of Light.”³⁶ Thus, the formula is adjusted to the present moment as the priests promise to pilot the soul up to the Light-world.

All through these prayers the priests have wafted incense onto the foodstuffs and other items on the left *ṭariana*. And, as Drower explains,

Throughout this opening part of the ritual [the priest] has held the myrtle in his left hand. He now twists it into a tiny wreath. Meanwhile, the *ashganda* has left the hut and goes to the *yardna*, taking flour with him. He mixes this with a little water in the palm of his hand and makes a saltless dough. As he goes by the fire on his way back to the hut, he passes the dough thrice through the flame, saying, ‘The name of Manda-d-Hiia is pronounced on thee’. This is called ‘the testimony of the fire’... On the *ashganda*’s re-entry into the hut, bearing the dough, each celebrant takes a pinch of it from him.³⁷

Eight prayers for the *pihta*, the dough-fragment, ensue.³⁸ The first one, “open[s] the great Door of Nourishment to the soul and spirit.”³⁹ Moreover, all eight *pihta*-prayers, “[represent] the eight months in which an infant is formed in the womb.”⁴⁰

Then the priest dips his ring *Šum-Yawar-Ziwa*⁴¹ into the hamra-bowl and recites two prayers for the *mambuha*, the drink identified with the hamra in this case.⁴² The last sentence of the second *mambuha*-prayer is, “(Like) the mingling of wine with water, so may Thy truth, thy righteousness and thy faith be added to those who love Thy name of Truth.”⁴³ “Those who love Thy name of Truth” refers to, “...those priests who arranged the three mysteries; then, *in you*, and *by you*, and *in the spirit and soul ye cited*, the mingling (seasoning) hath taken place...”⁴⁴ This is an important exegesis: the effect comes about in the priests themselves, by them, as activators, and, finally, in the spirit and soul aided by the priests.

CP 46 and 47 are said over the myrtle-wreath, the *klila*; the prayers interweave spirit and soul.⁴⁵ Part of the second prayer reads, “Sure, assured, armed and prepared, resplendent and beauteous (are they) when the wreath with its mysteries is set on the heads of these souls of this ascent (*masiqta*) to the great gate of Abathur’s house...”⁴⁶ CP 48, an oil-prayer, ensues, and this prayer clears the soul’s vision, according to *ATŠ*.⁴⁷

The priests have now reached a crucial stage in the *masiqta* proceedings, *viz.* CP 49. Having put down the *klila* and the *pihta* on the *ṭarīania*, the priests each place their hands on one of the *faṭīria*, and start to pray CP 49, “This, the glory and light of life, is to bring forth the spirit and soul from the body and to clothe the living soul in a living garment.”⁴⁸

Further, the prayer speaks of *Šauriel*, the angel of death who releases soul and spirit from the body. In addition, the soul now acquires vestments of light after ‘uthria have removed every trace of bodily components in the soul.⁴⁹ Now, the hostile planets are impressed by the soul’s radiant appearance, but they can do nothing to harm it. In fact, the planets would very much like to have such a garment themselves. Soon, the soul reaches the scales of Abathur,

...his scales are set up and spirits and souls are questioned before him as to their names, their signs, their blessing, their baptism and everything that is

therewith. The soul of N. hath entered the House of Abathur and hath given her name, her sign, her blessing, her baptism and everything that is therewith! The souls of our fathers were signed with the sign of Life and the name of the Life and the name of Manda-d-Hiia was pronounced over them. They put them in the scales, putting in their deeds and rewards and weighed them. And the perfect went in (also), the spirit with the soul, but they took them out (for they were) clean.⁵⁰

During this prayer a number of important activities take place. According to Drower, the priest “sits, and taking the soft dough of the *pihta*, he folds it about the myrtle-wreath, but does not allow the two ends to meet. This rite is called ‘clothing the wreath’.”⁵¹ In his left hand the priest holds aloft the arranged klila, and then he puts each *ḥaṭira* down on the tray in front of him, placing some of each kind of fruit, seed, and nut on each *ḥaṭira* as well as a few shreds of Ba. Drower says, “The *ḥaṭira* when thus treated becomes a *qina* (‘an arrangement’).”⁵²

Then, “Each celebrant dips four fingers into the *misha*, his little finger and thumb meeting tip to tip. Holding the ‘clothed’ myrtle-wreath in his other hand, he ‘signs’ a *ḥaṭira*, that is to say, he makes three passes over it from left to right.”⁵³

These three, triple passes occur at designated passages in CP 49. One text says, “...at ‘that which is in her of the body’ he shall sign thrice, and at ‘the House of Abathur’ he shall sign thrice. And at the end he shall say ‘the spirit of N. of this *masiqta* hath gone and become of (*the same*) nature as the soul’. And he ends and signs thrice.”⁵⁴ The effect of these acts and words is, “...the eyes of the soul turn towards and gaze at the spirit, and she reacheth her hand towards her and embraceth her with all her strength.”⁵⁵

CP 50, the next prayer, portrays the risen soul sitting in heavenly splendor.⁵⁶ Here, another triple sign is required. Then, at CP 51, signs are due at these words, “When this, the soul of N., casteth off her bodily garment, She putteth on the dress of Life and becometh like unto the Great Life in Light.”⁵⁷ Finally, a triple pass is called for at CP 52.⁵⁸

The priest now returns to the rest of his *ḥaṭiria* and treats them in the same fashion as the first one, starting with CP 33 again. All prayers and passes must be repeated for each *ḥaṭira*. There is, however, *one* important exception: the very last *ḥaṭira*, i.e. the fifteenth in a set-up of four celebrants, receives no sign at CP 52.⁵⁹

The faṭiria are piled into a stack, and the priests now put their hands on their stacks, reciting *CP* 53, which is called “the seal of the masiqta.”⁶⁰

But the masiqta is by no means over; the *CP* commentary simply states that the crucial part involving *CP* 49-53 is finished. *CP* 49 is, however, repeated, but now a long commemoration prayer, *CP* 170, is inserted into it at the phrase “the House of Abathur.”⁶¹ In this prayer the ascending soul is named, together with a vast array of past and present members of the Mandaean community. To a large extent, *CP* 170 is a priest genealogy. The prayer asks for the forgiveness of sins for all Mandaeans, from the Light-beings of primordial times on, through the whole Mandaean “history,” to the name of the newly deceased and those of his family. After this substantial break in *CP* 49, the priests pick up where they left off, at “the House of Abathur,” and finish the prayer.

Lifting their hands from the piles of faṭiria in front of them, the priests repeat the mambuha-prayer, *CP* 44, while still holding aloft the wrapped klila. But now the klila and pihta are separated, and the wreath is laid down on the pile of faṭiria.⁶² *ATŠ* informs that the wreath is, “an inner heart situated in the breast.”⁶³ This interpretation associates klila and Ba, whose “breast” has been distributed onto each faṭira. Both wreath and Ba are spirit-symbols.

For the next step in the proceedings Drower cautions, “Should the slightest error be made at this point, the entire masiqta is invalid; moreover, the soul for whom it is celebrated may be injured. The priest who made the mistake is automatically disqualified from his office.”⁶⁴ Now, the priests are instructed to

...say ‘One and two and three’ and detach the *pihta* from the *klila*... and take a piece from one upper *faṭira* and one lower *faṭira*; deposit (*therein*) a portion of that which is therein and say, ‘I have detached and divided and deposited a fragment of the Ba (*bḥ*) (or a portion of that which is therein)’ ‘Kuṣṭa make thee whole! Water into wine, all water!!’⁶⁵

To break off one piece of the upper faṭira and one from the lower one, is interpreted as, “...the mouth which ye opened for the soul.”⁶⁶ After having done this, the priests take the two faṭiria-pieces, together with a sliver of Ba from their ṭariania, and press these three items into the pihta. Next, water is poured from the water-bottle into the hamra. Drower supplies this information,

According to the commentaries, this mingling of water and wine in the bowl represents the union of the cosmic Father and Mother, a union previously sanctified by the dipping of the priestly ring. The Divine Womb, represented by the *hamra* bowl, is now fertilized.⁶⁷

The priests now utter the formula, “Eating in the Above, drinking in the Above and casting incense in the Above,”⁶⁸ during which each priest dips his folded-up *pihta* containing the *faṭiria*-fragments and the Ba into the *hamra*. CP 54 is recited as this takes place, the effect being,

...then spirit, soul and body are firmly integrated and ye have girt them together with a single girdle. And when ye mingled water with the wine, ye mingled a great mystery with a mighty mystery and from them the soul was formed...And when ye placed both *pihtas* (breads) in it, into the wine and water, ye clothed that soul and the *masiqta* which ye have celebrated, with the Mother and the Father, for they are (*symbolized by?*) the wine and the water.⁶⁹

After this, CP 55, short and apt, follows, “The Great Life spoke and revealed (opened) with His mouth, in His own radiance, light and glory.”⁷⁰ Each priest now imitates the Great Life, “...pushes aside his *ṭandama*, opens his mouth and drops the *pihta* into it, swallowing it whole. Then he drinks the *hamra*.”⁷¹ ATŠ comments, “...ye gave food and drink and good wayside fare to that soul.”⁷²

The aṣganda now brings into the mandi a water-bottle that has, so far, been kept outside. This water is rinsing-water, *halalta*, and the priests rinse their wine-bowl with this, drink it, and pronounce CP 56.⁷³ An incense-prayer, CP 57, follows, but the sources differ with respect to the throwing of incense on the fire at this point.⁷⁴

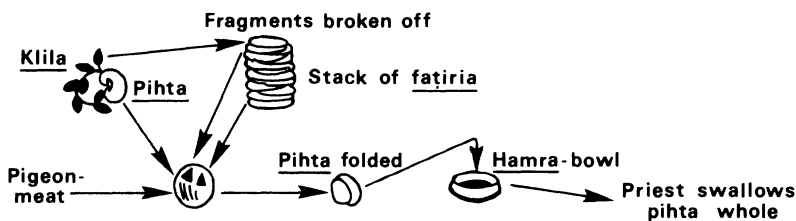


Figure 2: Procedures for creating a new body ('uṣṭuna) for the soul.

Throughout the rest of the prayers and hymns, the priests extend their hands above the heap of *faṭiria*.⁷⁵ CP 91 is the last prayer for this section of the *masiqta*.⁷⁶ Finally, the priests conclude by

exchanging the handshake, *kušta*, saying, “May *Kušta* strengthen you, my brother-‘uthras! The living have been joined in communion, just as ‘uthras in their *škintas* are joined in communion. Pleasing is your fragrance, my brothers, in your innermost, that is all full of radiance.”⁷⁷

The Second part of the Masiqta: The First treatment of the six Faṭiria (6,1)

Drower’s presentations of the masiqta pay little or no attention to the second section following the treatment of the sixty faṭiria. In this section there are six faṭiria which have, so far, been left untreated on the ṭariana. Drower admits that she fails to understand the necessity for a full repetition of the masiqta ritual for these six faṭiria.⁷⁸ Her brief outline of the prayers for the six leaves out any description of their treatment.⁷⁹ But because the consecration of the six faṭiria is required for all masqata,⁸⁰ it is necessary to present the procedure for the six to the extent that it differs from “the masiqta of the sixty.” Here, *ARR* gives the fullest account.

Having finished with the sixty faṭiria, the priest turns to the additional six and starts, as before, with *CP* 32, the pandama-prayer.⁸¹ The action as far as to the first recital of *CP* 49 is identical to the prayers and practices for the first batch of faṭiria. But, “Then there came a voice from amongst a thousand tabernacles at which their [i.e. the ‘uthrias’] very limbs became weak, (it said) ‘Be heedful lest (*thou signest*) a sign (at) the *Ma d-bh* (or) the soul will not enter.’”⁸² *ATŠ* warns, “Should he mistake and sign, he is like unto a date-palm which fire hath consumed; the right eye of the priest and the left eye of the soul will have incurred injury thereby and that priest is polluted.”⁸³

The two other signs during *CP* 49 are, apparently, due in this section; only the first sign causes destruction. *CP* 50 follows, but requires no sign this time. But at *CP* 51, again, the priest must be careful,

And when ye...come to the words ‘when this soul of N. taketh off its bodily garment and putteth on raiment of Life and becometh like unto the Life’; at this point, as at (the words) ‘that which is with her’, ye shall be on guard... For a ‘pass’ (made) at (the words) ‘that which is with her’, is the spirit’s and the ‘pass’ at ‘I am baptized in the name of the Life’ [i.e. at *CP* 51] is that of the soul. If thou makest a ‘pass’ at the ‘that which is with her’ thou neglectest

(*dost pass by*) the soul. But if thou didst guard thy hand (*from making the pass*) at 'that which is with her', that which thou didst wish was observed; their Garment is preserved; thou hast preserved them equally, and established them...⁸⁴

With respect to *CP* 52, too, *ATS* cautions,

And when ye recite... [*CP* 52] (if) ye have guarded (restrained) your hands at the conclusion of this prayer and did not make the pass, the glory of that vesture in which ye arrayed that soul is increased twofold and no spot defileth it, but if ye made the pass that vesture has become seriously stained.⁸⁵

From here, the prayers and ritual run as previously, through *CP* 91, after which the six *faṭiria* require an additional set of prayers.⁸⁶ This section ends with *CP* 170, the genealogy-prayer.⁸⁷

ARR says of the first sixty *faṭiria*, "For these sixty...keep the (*un-born*) babe safe: thirty for the days, and thirty for the nights during which it breathes not (yet) the breath of life."⁸⁸ And *ATS* adds, "For They (the Parents?) are the source (head) of the body, and those sixty *faṭiria* are like a body without a head."⁸⁹ "The head," then, is furnished by the last, six *faṭiria*, completing the celestial body.

The priests deconsecrate themselves, prepare and consume the same two meals which preceded the *masiqta*, thus concluding the symmetrical pattern of the ritual. Finally, in Drower's words,

The *ashganda* collects the piles of *faṭiria* from the *tariania* and takes down the dove from the north wall. He wraps bread and dead bird together in a white cloth and places the bundle reverently aside somewhere in the *bit manda* ...the bundle is interred by the *ashganda* in the sacred area. Any part may be chosen except ground lying east of the cult-hut.⁹⁰

The Second treatment of the Six Faṭiria (6,2): The Ṭabahata Masiqta

Ṭabahata is the "masiqta of the Parents," which is celebrated only once a year, on the last day of the five-day Panja-feast. A number of ceremonies and meals for the dead take place at this propitious time of direct access to the Light-world.⁹¹ Any Mandaean who have died an impure death during the preceding year must have a *Ṭabahata masiqta* read for his soul on the last day of Panja.⁹² The *Ṭabahata* rectifies the evil effects of an unclean death, and it helps the soul out of the *maṭarata* where it has, in all likelihood, been stuck since its departure from the body. Thus, this

masiqta fulfils the purpose only partially achieved by the temporary masiqta read for the soul three days after the body's death.⁹³ *ATŠ* says,

For before they [i.e. the arrested souls] were freed by the *Dabahata*, by the recitation of which spirit and soul were strengthened, they were wandering about. (*After it?*) they became a single body ('*uštuna*) of which the *Dabahata* was the seal...⁹⁴

Priests are warned against reciting *Ṭabahata* at any other time during the year.⁹⁵ This masiqta is presented after the two previous parts in *ARR*, which instructs the priest,

Up to this (point) the first part has been set out, that is the Mother's. She is Earth which bringeth forth fruits and seeds...Behold! Earth is the Mother and the worlds of light the Father. And that (*first*) section of the 'sixty' [i.e. the sixty plus the first treatment of the six] concerns the Mother, but the section of *abahatan* ('our fathers') concerns the Father: it is that in which signings and passes...are numerous. And the section of 'our fathers' is the principal (*section*).⁹⁶

The six faṭiria which have received preliminary treatment in the previous part, will now be dealt with for the second time. To recapitulate: In the first part of the sixty, the fifteenth faṭira was left unsigned at *CP* 52. In the second part, the sixth faṭira received no sign at three passages, in *CP* 49, 51, and 52. One may now expect these "open-ended" acts to be completed, and this is, in fact, the goal of the third part, the *Ṭabahata*.

The prayers differ somewhat from those in the two preceding parts of the masiqta. Before he reaches the mambuha-prayer, *CP* 33, the priest utters four other prayers.⁹⁷ Then, *CP* 81 is inserted before the incense-prayer, *CP* 34.⁹⁸ A new one, *CP* 1, for the turban, *burziŋqa* follows.⁹⁹ The priest, next, goes through *CP* 75-77, as before, and, at *CP* 9, "...[the soul] becomes so enveloped in the mysteries of the Father that not one of the purgatory-potentates dare to block her way."¹⁰⁰ The procedure continues as before, but the two klila-prayers, *CP* 46 and 47 are left out. This omission is an important clue—the reference to the spirit-symbol is avoided at this point.

CP 48 follows, but, at *CP* 49, 51, and 52 *all six* faṭiria are signed. *ARR* explains the significance of the myrtle on the heap of faṭiria at this point,

...for any one of those *faṭiria* above which no myrtle was laid is wasted and spoilt, because myrtle is the seal of... [CP 52]. It is clothing which preserves the soul. So she goes and puts it on, rejoices in it and is enveloped in it, for it is a body into which she entereth.¹⁰¹

ARR reminds the priest to sign at the sixth *faṭiria*, but also warns, "...as yet thou hast not admitted that soul into the communion of life!"¹⁰² The soul obtains a letter from Abathur at CP 53, and enters the scales at CP 54.¹⁰³ It is worth noticing that the prayers CP 49, 170, and 44 are omitted in this part of the masiqta.

Action now proceeds as in the previous part for the six, with the eating of the *pihta* at CP 55. CP 70 and 102 ensue before CP 71, at which, "...judgement together with prosecution is finished with her at that moment, and all that was taken away from her (*the soul*) is restored to her."¹⁰⁴ CP 72 follows, before the celebrant turns to three of the '*niania*, "responses," belonging in the masiqta. These are CP 80, 101, and 102.¹⁰⁵

The rest of the prayers partly follow the sequence of the previous part for the six,¹⁰⁶ ending, likewise, with CP 170. Thus, there are parallels as well as differences between the two parts for the six *faṭiria* and with respect to all three parts. The sequences of the prayers are shown in the figure below.

Figure 3: The Ṭabahata Masiqta

60 <i>faṭiria</i>	6 <i>faṭiria</i> (6,1)	6 <i>faṭiria</i> (6,2)
		CP:
		91
		96
CP:	CP:	79 myrtle
		80
33 water-of-Life	33, etc. as in 60	33
		81
34 incense		34
35		1 turban
75-77		75-77
9		9
35		35
36-45 <i>pihta</i> and <i>mambuha</i>		36-45
46-47 <i>klila</i>		

48 oil		48
49 <i>signs</i>	<i>no sign</i> at 6th,	49 <i>all 6 signed</i>
50 <i>signs</i>	at ma-d-bh	50
51 <i>signs</i>	<i>no signs</i> at 6th	51 <i>all 6 signed</i>
52 <i>signs</i> , except for 60th	<i>no signs</i> at 6th	52 <i>all 6 signed</i>
53 seal of masiqta	53, etc. as in 60	53
49		
170 inserted into 49		
44		
54 pihta in hamra		54
55 pihta swallowed		55
56 drinking halalta		56
57-72		57-72
91	91-99	91-99
	71	70
	100	102
	71-72	71-72
		80
	101-103	101-102
	63	63
	108	58
	3 turban	3
	35	35
	9	
	58	58
	65	65
	71	76
	170 Ṭabahatan	170

Interpretation

The presentation of the masiqta shows that spoken words accompanied by pertinent acts have a creative effect and that these words and acts affect the upper worlds. Modelled after the rituals of the primordial beings in the Light-world, the priests' actions "re-create" these ceremonies. The Light-beings sent down prayers and rituals so that they might be carried out on earth. But the 'uthria themselves perform these rituals above, too.¹⁰⁷ This reciprocity breaks the borderlines between Light-world and earth, and the

earthly rituals “work” because the priests are, essentially, ‘uthria on earth.

The very tangibility of the elements used in the masiqta may strike an observer as a gross feature for a Gnostic religion. Also, the meticulous rules seem obscure, even offensively so. For instance, the dove-sacrifice necessary for the masiqta has puzzled scholars.¹⁰⁸ Drower can never quite reconcile this sacrifice with the fact that the Mandaeans are, as she says, “above all things, baptizers.”¹⁰⁹ To Drower’s mind, baptizers cannot be sacrificers. This attitude exemplifies a pervasive scholarly inability to accept material rituals in Gnostic—putatively lofty and purely speculative—systems. The dove’s death, however, forms a parallel to the human body that has just died. In order to live up there, one must die down here. The Ba signifies the spirit capable of ascending. Thus materially representing the spirit, this component is made fit for priestly manipulation.

The direction of movement from below to above is, furthermore, expressed in a consistent left-right symbolism. “Juggling” the two realms, left: earth, right: Light-world, the priests handle the items on their ṭariania. Incense is wafted from the right to the left tray, enveloping the “earthly” elements in the fragrance of the Light-world. Further, the klila and the pihta are held in the priest’s left hand while he treats the faṭiria with his right hand. The “clothed” wreath—soul and spirit—is to be brought from earth to Light-world. The faṭiria seem to represent those souls that have already transcended.

The “pregnant” language in many of the prayers and the fertilizing effect of the ring dipped in the hamra-bowl both indicate that a birth is to take place. However, the problem presents itself: if both pihta and the faṭiria on the ṭariana represent the soul, why the difference in ritual procedure for the two kinds of breads? Are both, in fact, to ascend?

The faṭiria—spoken of both in the singular and in the plural—are signed (or not signed) at certain prayer-passages. *CP* 49 expressively anticipates that the soul will enter Abathur’s house, and *CP* 52, that it will ascend to the Light-world. The full repetition for all faṭiria would indicate that these are, indeed, the souls of central concern to the priests. In the two first parts of the masiqta *CP* 170,

the Ṭabahatan (“Our Fathers”), is inserted into *CP* 49. During these recitals the priest holds his hand above the heap of faṭiria.

I interpret this part of the ritual as a securing of all Mandaean souls in their ascent. Only the successfully saved souls of all previous Mandaeans hold out hope for the new soul symbolized by the pihta. The faṭiria signify these previously ascended souls so that these may display the goal for the newly released soul and spirit. The presence of these souls collapses time into mythic time: all ascended Mandaeans are present, manipulated, and, finally, buried. They represent the laufa into which the pihta will be completely integrated.

The klila mediates the contact between ancestors and the pihta when the wreath is disconnected from the pihta and put on the pile of faṭiria. The wreath, the “inner heart,”¹¹⁰ vivifies the ancestors, invigorates them with its evergreen life. This is the spirit, manifested in an aspect different than that of the Ba. In turn, the faṭiria-pieces broken off to feed the soul, express, once more, the mutual dependency of ancestors and rising soul. The fed soul then starts its gestation-period as the priest swallows it, *whole*.¹¹¹ Letting no fertile liquid perish, the priest takes care to drink both hamra and halalta. Thus impregnated, the priest can be said to gradually transform the raw pihta into a full-fledged ancestor, i.e. faṭira.¹¹² The faṭiria show the envisioned status of the rising pihta.

Drower’s interpretations of the rituals for the faṭiria and pihta are only partially useful.¹¹³ Perhaps unduly influenced by religious royal ideology and its penchant for idealistic flights of thought, Drower persists in seeing Adakas-Ziwa (primordial, Light-world man) recreated in every masiqta as “sublimated humanity.”¹¹⁴ Also, this Adam—represented by the pihta(!)—is allegedly crowned as messiah and king, with the klila.

According to Rudolph, the faṭiria-ceremony is a relatively new-fangled idea.¹¹⁵ He also expresses surprise that the priest does not eat the faṭira.¹¹⁶ But in the same work Rudolph adds an exclamation-mark to the information that the priest eats for the soul.¹¹⁷

Oliver says of the ceremony that it is,

...the only Madaean religious ceremony where current practice differs extremely widely from even the rubrics of the *Qolasta* [i.e. *CP*]... therefore

this particular portion of the masiqta must be very late indeed and may be regarded as an innovation on the part of the [priest] hierarchy.¹¹⁸

He goes on to speculate, “In the course of time the ceremony of faṭiri, being more colorful than mere recitation, has come to appear as the central part of the rite...”¹¹⁹ Only hymns and prayers count for Oliver.

Regarding the correlation between prayers and action in the masiqta, Rudolph calls *CP* 53-55, “...ohne Bezug auf die Handlung.”¹²⁰ But perhaps he has merely failed to discern what is really happening at this point in the ritual.

Like Drower,¹²¹ Rudolph, too, is mystified at the repeated ritual for the six faṭiria.¹²² Both scholars assume that the Father-side of the masiqta starts with the first treatment of the six (6,1).¹²³ *ARR*, however, contradicts this, stating that the first part for the six belongs to the Mother-masiqta.¹²⁴ The lack of signs for the designated faṭira at *CP* 49, 51 and 52 in 6,1 corresponds to the lacking sign for the sixtieth faṭira in the first part. This omission of sign for the sixtieth at the end of *CP* 52 which starts with the words, “Whose son am I?”, indicates the first part’s “openness” towards the second part. In this part the passage in *CP* 49, where a sign is prohibited for the sixth faṭira, is “that which is in her of the body.” In *ARR* Pure Ether goes to ask the Light-world king about the significance of this lack of sealing. The king launches into a lengthy, esoteric exegesis which includes the following,

If thou signest (at the *ma ḡ-bḥ*)...the soul perisheth and is destroyed. Look at that salt yonder, which is (*symbolises*) the soul! (*Salt*) when covered with water, a stole of water covers it, a tunic...of water is placed on its shoulders, a girdle of water is bound about it and it putteth on leggings of water! When it cometh out of its (*watery*) dress, and is clothed in air (ether) it becomes changed! It (*salt*) may lie in the earth a thousand thousand years and yet not be spoilt, but when water reaches it, it goes wrong and is destroyed. Behold! the soul is sealed with sixty-six seals...see, (*therefore*), that signing (*performed*) at the *ma ḡ-bḥ* destroys them and spoils the whole Body (*‘uṣṭuna*)...¹²⁵

The king draws a parallel between the salt and the new body (*‘uṣṭuna*) for the soul. Just as water dissolves salt, so a sign at the mention of the spirit ruins the *‘uṣṭuna*.

ARR consistently uses the abbreviated formula *ma ḡ-bḥ*, not *ma ḡ-bḥ ḡ-pagra*, as in *CP*. Since there is, strictly, no “body”—only an envisioned *‘uṣṭuna*—at this point, I take the *pagra* to mean,

simply, the lower part of the soul; this is the spirit. *Ma d-bh* is an abbreviation which hints at the spirit without explicitly mentioning it by name. Some word-play may be involved here, too, since *bh* becomes *Ba*.

Of the two other prohibited signs for the sixth *faṭīra* in 6,1, that omitted in *CP* 52 parallels the prohibition to sign the sixtieth in the first part of the *masiqta*.

Only the *Ṭabahata*, the double *masiqta*,¹²⁶ frees the unlucky souls from the purgatories and, importantly, confirms the unhindered access to the Light-world for all Mandaeans who have left their bodies. Closing the two previous parts of the *masiqta*, the *Ṭabahata* puts an end to the dangers that have affected the ascending souls so far. At *Panja*, the priests complete their “creation from below.” The second recital of *CP* 49, with the inserted *CP* 170, is omitted in the *Ṭabahata*. This means that all ascending souls have left *Abathur*’s house, they have arisen further, to the threshold of the Light-world.¹²⁷

One may note that the last prayer in the treatment of the sixty *faṭīria* is *CP* 91 which starts the third part, 6,2. And, parallel to its position in 6,1, *CP* 170 concludes the third, Father-part of the *masiqta*. The center of all three parts, however, remains in the activities at *CP* 49-56. Until 6,2 closes all three parts, other *masqata* performed during the old year remain “open-ended.” The final signings in 6,2 complete the journey of the souls.

The treatment of the sixty and the first part for the six *faṭīria* both belong to the Mother-side. Only the second treatment of the six belong to the Father-*masiqta*. *Together*—celebrated only at *Panja*—the Father- and the Mother-side make up the *masiqta* of the Parents.¹²⁸ The very title of *CP* 170, *Ṭabahatan*, has caused Drower to confuse this prayer with the *Ṭabahata masiqta*.¹²⁹ The prayer, however, is included in all three parts of the *masiqta* of the almost identical name. The fact that *Abahata* refers to both “fathers” and “parents” has contributed to the misunderstanding of the sequence of the *masiqta*-parts as well as to a mix-up of the *masiqta* with the prayer.

Conclusion

Generally, scholars of Mandaicism have had little to say about the significance of the masiqta-ritual. The priestly activities presented here disturbingly resemble magical procedures. Rudolph, for instance, dismisses the “magical-symbolic act” of the *ḥatir*-ritual as “younger,” more degenerate; the hymns are older, more venerable.¹³⁰ In the *Left Ginza*, the savior unites spirit and soul, and, Rudolph indicates, this salvific fact ought to suffice. This older strain of the Mandaean corpus contains, moreover, ethical concerns which have been forced back by the magic in the younger texts.¹³¹ Rudolph has spent much effort on separating and identifying the two strata in the Mandaean sources: the allegedly older, ethic-centered, dualistic strain and the more recent, monistic one indulging in magic.¹³²

However, the masiqta-liturgy, of both *CP* and *GL*, belongs in the oldest Mandaean literature.¹³³ Part of it can be assigned to the third century A.D., or, perhaps, even earlier.¹³⁴ It is advisable to take Lidzbarski’s early statement into account: the hymns and prayers are written *for the cult*, in the most ancient times.¹³⁵ If the admittedly old hymns are to be taken seriously, then, they should be seen as *ritual* hymns.¹³⁶ For there is—*contra* Rudolph—no conflict between the content of the hymnic prayers and the priestly activities.

The evolutionistic tenor of Rudolph’s theories turns bit shaky in the following,

...the securing of the soul’s masiqta is a central concern for all Gnostic systems, whether in practical-cultic manner, or ‘purely Gnostic’, therefore the Mandaean-Gnostic death-ceremony, exactly because of its primary cultic character, may, with fair certainty, claim its place at the early stages of the Gnostic religion in the Orient.¹³⁷

Here, ritual does not appear to be secondary, but stubbornly persisting along with the, perhaps, newer Gnosis. Rudolph generally mistrusts “the interpretation of ceremonial procedures towards pensive and banal mysteries.”¹³⁸ Whilst the existence of later, “secondary” and indeed often banal interpretations of rituals cannot be denied, I would argue that in this case the rite should be understood on the basis of the texts dismissed by Rudolph.¹³⁹

Neither Rudolph’s treatment of the masiqta nor his section on Panja include any explanation of the *Ṭabahata-masiqta*.¹⁴⁰

Drower, on the other hand, plunges into a high church interpretation of the Ṭabahata. She compares the Mother- and the Father-side—based on her inadequate understanding of the *ARR* division of the masqata—to the two parts of the Orthodox Mass.¹⁴¹ But she is not particularly favorably inclined towards the texts describing the masiqta—though, at least she deemed the texts worthy of translation.¹⁴²

To sum up: scholars are generally at a loss when trying to understand the Mandaean masiqta as a ritual making internal sense, i.e. as both cultically and theologically tenable. The action of the death-mass has been represented as “magic” in its most pejorative sense. Such judgements seem to suggest that religious ritual is essentially superfluous—words ought to suffice.

However, myth and ritual are both necessary; they express the same insight, albeit on different levels. Taken together the two components display confidence in efficacious action directed across the hindering and hostile spheres. Precisely because the priests are ‘uthria on earth, they are able to bridge the distance between the worlds. Activating the powers on all levels, the priests maintain the mutual dependency between earth and Light-world, thus obeying the wish of the ‘uthria on high.¹⁴³

The potency of the performance demands words paired with set actions; both words and actions carry symbolic meanings. There is no reason for looking, in a one-sided fashion, at rituals as merely “primitive acts” or, alternatively, to consider only the liturgies in total isolation from their aspect of practice. It is almost as if taking the rituals seriously would endanger the significance of the Gnosis. But practice is no afterthought or mere remedy in Mandaeism; it is an autonomous religious expression. The priests’ preserving of the laufa in their work directed towards the other world eases and creatively affects the dualistic underpinnings of the religion.

Mandaean Gnosis is, essentially, “know-how.” The religion’s practical aspect does not diminish the gnosis, but, on the contrary, enhances its rightful position.

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¹ E. S. Drower, *The Haran Gawaita and the Baptism of Hibil Ziwa*, Citta del Vaticano: Studi e Testi 176, 1953, XI.

² E.g. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran*, Leiden: Brill, 1962² (hereafter cited as *MII*); *Water into Wine*, London: Murray, 1956 (hereafter cited as *WW*); K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer II: Der Kult*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961; E. Segelberg, *Maṣbuta. Studies in the Ritual of the Mandaean Baptism*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958.

³ *WW* p. 243-44. The plural of *masiqta* is *masqata*.

⁴ Singular: 'uthra.

⁵ See *MII* p. 210-11, *WW* p. 242, Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 260-61.

⁶ Drower, *A Pair of Naṣoraeen Commentaries (Two Priestly Documents). The Great "First World." The Lesser "First World."* Leiden: Brill, 1963 (hereafter cited as, respectively, *ARR* [*Alma Riṣaia Rba*] and *ARZ* [*Alma Riṣaia Zuṭa*]), XI.

⁷ Drower, *The Coronation of the Great Šiṣlam. Being a Description of the Rite of the Coronation of a Mandaean Priest According to the Ancient Canon*, Leiden: Brill, 1962 (hereafter cited as *Cor.*), XI. The Ṭabahata takes even longer.

⁸ *Zidqa brikha* ("Blessed Oblation") and *dukhra* ("Commemoration"); see *MII* p. 201f., *WW* p. 245-47.

⁹ Drower, *The Thousand and Twelve Questions (Alf Trisar Šuialia)*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, Veröff. d. Inst. f. Orientforschung, 32, 1960 (hereafter cited as *ATŠ*), p. 257-58 (206).

¹⁰ *WW* p. 242-43. See illustration of mandi and immediate area in *MII* p. 135.

¹¹ *ARR* p. 12-13. "Knowledge-of-Life" (i.e. Manda q-Hiia), Ptahil, and Hibil Ziwa are Light-beings. — See also, Drower, "Sacraments during the Five-Day Feast of the Mandaeans," *Symbolon, Jahrbuch für Symbolforschung*, Bd. I, Basel/Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1960, (17-26), p. 25-26.

¹² *WW* p. 248, *ARR* p. 13, note 3.

¹³ Adam's ascent remains the model for all rising souls.

¹⁴ *WW* p. 248. "Yardna" (Jordan) refers to all flowing water.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; "Palga" means "portion, piece, share," according to, E. S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1963 (hereafter cited as *MD*), col. 360 B.

¹⁶ *WW* p. 250, note 1.

¹⁷ The prayers are quoted according to Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, Leiden: Brill, 1959 (hereafter cited as *CP*). The pandama-prayer is *CP* 32 (i.e. no. 32), p. 32-33.

¹⁸ *WW* p. 250. "Inner phial" is Drower's terminology for the water-bottle.

¹⁹ *CP* p. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See *ATŠ* p. 240 (143).

²² *CP* 34, p. 33-34. For the reciprocity of prayers see, M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza. Der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925 (The *Ginza* is separated into *Right Ginza* and *Left Ginza* [hereafter cited as *GR* and *GL*, respectively]), *GR* III, p. 119 (9-10) and *GR* XVI, 4, p. 389 (29-32).

²³ *ATŠ* p. 240-41 (143) and p. 241, note 1.

²⁴ *CP* p. 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72-88.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74. Note Ruha's lament here, (see my unpublished dissertation *Spirit Ruha in Mandaean Religion*, The University of Chicago, 1978, p. 5-7, 101-103).

²⁷ *CP* p. 76.

- ²⁸ *ATS* p. 241 (144).
²⁹ *Ibid.*
³⁰ *CP* p. 81.
³¹ I.e. he ought to have observed the duty of eating for the dead in the rituals designated for laypeople; this does not refer to the masiqta.
³² *ATS* p. 241 (146).
³³ *Ibid.*, the *CP* quotation is on p. 7, *CP*.
³⁴ See note 24, above.
³⁵ *ATS* p. 241 (147). The body here must be understood as ‘uṣṭuna.
³⁶ *ARR* p. 15; my emphasis.
³⁷ *WW* p. 251. According to the *CP* commentary, p. 41, the twining of the klila takes place after the recital of *CP* 45. See *MII* for the procedure of making the klila, p. 35.
³⁸ *CP* 36-43, p. 36-40.
³⁹ *ATS* p. 242 (148).
⁴⁰ *ARR* p. 15.
⁴¹ In *WW* Drower gives the abbreviated name, Šum Yawar, for the ring; cf. *MII* p. 31. See also *ATS* p. 242 (148), commentary on *CP* 38.
⁴² See *ARR* p. 16, note 1.
⁴³ *CP* 45, p. 41.
⁴⁴ *ATS* p. 243 (152); my emphasis.
⁴⁵ *ATS* p. 243 (153).
⁴⁶ *CP* 47, p. 42. Abathur weighs the souls in his scales.
⁴⁷ *ATS* p. 243 (153). Drower says, *WW* p. 251, that there are three oil-prayers at this stage, but her own translations of the texts do not support this.
⁴⁸ *CP* 49, p. 43.
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.
⁵¹ *WW* p. 251.
⁵² *Ibid.*
⁵³ *Ibid.*
⁵⁴ *Cor.* p. 28. The first passage is in *CP* p. 44, the second p. 44 or p. 45 (the phrase appears twice between the first and third passage), and the third, p. 46.
⁵⁵ *ATS* p. 244 (154).
⁵⁶ *CP* p. 46-47. Drower, *ibid* p. 46, finds this hymn “pure nonsense.”
⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47. *CP* suffers from a fatal omission in the translation here, the whole passage is left out. Drower admits her error, *ARR* p. 17, note 7, *ARZ* p. 81, note 3, and *Cor.* p. 28.
⁵⁸ *WW* p. 252.
⁵⁹ *ARR* p. 18, *WW* p. 254. This faṭira is referred to as the sixtieth fatira.
⁶⁰ *CP* p. 48.
⁶¹ *CP* 170, p. 151-54. For the *CP* phrase, see note 54, above.
⁶² *WW* p. 252.
⁶³ *ATS* p. 246 (166).
⁶⁴ *WW* p. 252.
⁶⁵ *ARR* p. 18, note 5. The quotation comes from an unpublished scroll, Šarḥ *Tabahata*. *Cor* has a related formula, p. 29 and p. 29-30, note 8.
⁶⁶ *ATS* p. 246 (166).
⁶⁷ *WW* p. 253. See also, Drower, *The Secret Adam*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1960, p. 79-80 and *ATS* p. 207 (35). Note especially the interpretation in *ARR* p. 36.

- ⁶⁸ *Cor* XVII and p. 29.
⁶⁹ *ATŠ* p. 246-47 (166-67). "Both pihtas" assume two celebrants in this set-up. *CP* 54 is on p. 48-49.
⁷⁰ *CP* p. 41.
⁷¹ *WW* p. 253.
⁷² *ATŠ* p. 247 (167).
⁷³ *CP* p. 49. This is a dedication-prayer to "the water of prayer."
⁷⁴ See *ATŠ* p. 247 (168) and *Cor* p. 30 for differing opinions. *CP* 57, p. 50.
⁷⁵ The prayers are *CP* 58-72. p. 50-61. Of these, two—*CP* 68 and 69, p. 54-55, and p. 55-56—are also found in, *GL* III, 20, p. 543-44; and 5, p. 513-14.
⁷⁶ *CP* p. 95.
⁷⁷ *ARR* p. 21.
⁷⁸ *MII* p. 164 and *WW* p. 244.
⁷⁹ *MII* p. 163-64.
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.
⁸¹ See above, note 17.
⁸² *ARR* p. 23. This warning seems to concern only the sixth faṭira, cf. the lack of sign for the fifteenth faṭira at *CP* 52 in the previous part.
⁸³ *ATŠ* p. 155 (187).
⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246 (163-64).
⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, (164-65).
⁸⁶ *CP* 92-99, 71, 100, 72, 101-103, 63, 108, 3, 35, 9, 58, 65, 71. See *ATŠ*, p. 260 (215) for the relationship between *CP* 63 and 108 at this point.
⁸⁷ *CP* p. 151-54. See also above, note 61. *CP* 170 is called *Ṭabahatan*: "Of our Fathers."
⁸⁸ *ARR* p. 38.
⁸⁹ *ATŠ* p. 239 (138).
⁹⁰ *WW* p. 255.
⁹¹ *MII* p. 90. A Mandaean who dies during Panja needs no masiqta at all!
⁹² See note 5, above, for the list of masqata.
⁹³ The masiqta of Šitil, for instance, is read over a person who has died in secular clothes; the masiqta is described in *ATŠ* p. 230-50.
⁹⁴ *ATŠ*, p. 249 (176); see also, *ibid.*, p. 239 (138).
⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 258 (209).
⁹⁶ *ARR* p. 39.
⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, The prayers are, *CP* 91, p. 95; 96, p. 98; 79, p. 80; 80, p. 89.
⁹⁸ *ARR* p. 40, *CP* 81, p. 90 and *CP* 34, p. 33-34.
⁹⁹ *CP* 1, p. 1-2.
¹⁰⁰ *ARR* p. 40; *CP* 9, p. 7-8.
¹⁰¹ *ARR* p. 42.
¹⁰² *Ibid.*
¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.
¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45-46.
¹⁰⁵ *CP* p. 89-90, p. 101.
¹⁰⁶ The sequence is: *CP* 63, 58, 3, 35, 58, 65, 76, 170.
¹⁰⁷ See e.g. *ARZ* p. 69-70; *ATŠ* p. 119 (26f); *GR* III, p. 119 (9-10) and *GR* XVI, 4, p. 389 (29-32).
¹⁰⁸ For instance, W. Brandt, *Die mandäische Religion*, Amsterdam: Philo, 1973 (repr. of 1889 ed.), p. 46-47; *Die Mandäer*, Amsterdam: Müller, 1915, p. 118-19.
¹⁰⁹ Drower, *The Secret Adam*, p. 32.

- ¹¹⁰ See above, note 63.
- ¹¹¹ See, Drower, "The Sacramental Bread (*Pihtha*) of the Mandaeans," *ZDMG* 105, NF 30, 1955 (115-51), p. 121-22.
- ¹¹² One might say that the priests themselves are only "half-baked," as they are still on earth. The fully "baked" condition would, one assumes, occur only in the Light-world.
- ¹¹³ Drower, *The Secret Adam*, p. 105-106.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ¹¹⁵ Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 278 and, especially, p. 409-10, note 6.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266, note 5.
- ¹¹⁸ W. Oliver, *The Mandaean Tarmid. The Growth of a Priesthood*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1967 (unpublished dissertation), p. 91.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92-93.
- ¹²⁰ Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 134, note 5; see also, *ibid.* p. 267, note 8. Rudolph misses the fact that *CP* 170 is inserted into the repeated *CP* 49.
- ¹²¹ See above, note 78.
- ¹²² Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 268.
- ¹²³ Drower, *The Secret Adam*, p. 75, and Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 266, note 1.
- ¹²⁴ *ARR* p. 39.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50. See Drower's notes here.
- ¹²⁶ See above, note 6.
- ¹²⁷ See above, note 104.
- ¹²⁸ Drower and Rudolph both call the first treatment of the six *faṭiria* the "Father-masiqta" (see above, note 123). Rudolph even says that this masiqta is the only one that takes place within the mandi (*Der Kult*, p. 266, note 1). *MD* 172 B, the entry *Ṭabahata*, does little to clarify the meaning of the term.
- ¹²⁹ Drower, *The Secret Adam*, p. 78, note 3.
- ¹³⁰ Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 269.
- ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- ¹³² Apart from, *Der Kult*, p. 340f, see, e.g., *Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965; "Quellenprobleme zum Ursprung und Alter der Mandäer," *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J. Neusner, Leiden: Brill, 1975 (112-42); "Ergebnisse einer literar-kritischen und traditions-geschichtlichen Untersuchung der mandäischen Schriften," *Zur Sprache und Literatur der Mandäer. Studia Mandaica I*, ed. R. Macuch, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976 (147-70).
- ¹³³ See T. Sävje-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalmbook*, Uppsala: Arb. utg. v. Vilhelm Ekmansstiftelsen, 55, 1949, p. 157-58 and 162-63; R. Macuch, "Anfänge der Mandäer," *Die Araber in der alten Welt, Bd. II*, ed. F. Altheim & R. Stiehl, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965 (67-190), p. 182-83.
- ¹³⁴ Macuch, "Anfänge," p. 158.
- ¹³⁵ Lidzbarski's intr. to *Ginza*, XII.
- ¹³⁶ For Rudolph's views, see above notes 115 and 120.
- ¹³⁷ Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 423; a similar lack of certainty can also be detected in C. Colpe's art. "Mandäismus," *RGV IV*³, 1960 (cols. 709-12), col. 709.
- ¹³⁸ Rudolph, "Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der mandäischen Religionsgeschichte," *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. K.-W. Tröger, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973 (121-48) p. 145-46. V. Schou-Pedersen, *Bidrag til en Analyse af*

de mandaeiske Skrifter, Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1940, thinks it contradictory to perform “a masiqta for the dead, as if the relatives could assist them,” p. 135, note 1.

¹³⁹ Rudolph, “Zum gegenwärtigen Stand,” p. 146, note 119.

¹⁴⁰ Rudolph, *Der Kult*, p. 260f and p. 333.

¹⁴¹ Drower, *The Secret Adam*, p. 78, note 2.

¹⁴² See Drower’s introduction to *ARR* and *ARZ*, VIII.

¹⁴³ See *ARZ*, p. 69-70.

DISSENT THROUGH HOLINESS: THE CASE
OF THE RADICAL RENOUNCER IN
THERAVADA BUDDHIST COUNTRIES

ILANA FRIEDRICH SILBER

Introduction

Buddhism has often been considered—perhaps too simplistically—the other-worldly religion par excellence, and a recurrent theme in sociological and anthropological literature on Buddhism has been the attempt to understand what enables an ideology so strongly oriented toward other-worldliness to be sustained in societies necessarily geared, as all societies are, to many worldly concerns. This paper approaches the problem through an analysis of the position held in Theravada Buddhist countries by individuals and groups striving at a full, radical enactment of world-renunciation, the highest Buddhist tenet and the epitome of Buddhist other-worldliness. Certain characteristics of the social and cultural position of these radical renouncers, it is argued, cannot be understood independently of a general interpretation of the workings of Buddhism in Theravada societies, to which they provide, in turn, an invaluable and yet unexploited clue.

World-renunciation, a tenet having evident asocial or even antisocial implications, is venerated as a central ideal in Theravada Buddhist countries. While the path of renunciation is actually followed by a small minority only — the community of religious virtuosi who comprise the Buddhist Sangha — the special reverence in which the Sangha is held, and the all-important, pivotal position it has come to occupy, testify to the paramount significance of the ideal of renunciation for society at large in these countries.

Much attention has been paid by students of Theravada Buddhism to the elaborate network of interaction established between religious virtuosi and the lay sector, constituting what R. J. Z. Werblowsky has called the “magnetic field” of Sangha and laity.¹ There is, however, an internal distinction within the Sangha whose

implications for Buddhism as an operative religion have not yet been sufficiently explored. This is the distinction between two types of virtuosi:

(1) Those living in monastic communities and entering established patterns of interaction with laymen, who will be called here the "institutionalized virtuosi."

(2) Those — numerically negligible — adhering to a more radical renunciation, entailing a greater disconnection from the lay world, to be designated "radical virtuosi."

The part played by radical virtuosi in the "magnetic field" referred to above has been left largely unexamined and will be of major concern in this paper, as it took shape, especially, in three Theravada Buddhist countries: Burma, Thailand and Ceylon.

Two distinct, albeit related, aspects of the radical virtuosi's position in these countries appear to require elucidation. First, while the cultural supremacy of the ideal of renunciation remains uncontested, the very man who strives for it in the most rigorous and single-minded fashion, the radical virtuoso, evokes ambivalent attitudes in Theravada societies: thus, he can inspire the greatest awe as well as be the object of suspicion and disapproval. Second, it is interesting, from a comparative point of view, that this type of religious virtuosi achieved neither a subversive nor transformative influence of significance upon wider society. While undoubtedly charismatic in a certain sense — since they could become the object of extreme veneration — such men did not originate any full-fledged heterodoxies or movements of dissent and can be said to have retained, on the whole, a charisma of a non-innovative, non-revolutionary type which, incidentally, has not received much attention in the sociology of religion or sociology in general. This clearly differs, for example, from the part played by religious radicalism throughout the history of Christian civilization, especially as it culminated in the far-reaching impact of the Protestant Reformation upon Western society — the Weberian theme.

The ambivalence toward these radical virtuosi and the fact that they never achieved more than a marginal position in Burma, Thailand and Ceylon will be the focus of this paper. These two characteristics can be better understood, it will be argued, through an analysis of the mechanisms which appear to have evolved in

Theravada Buddhism and to have enabled this civilization to cope with the other-worldliness of its own ideals. These mechanisms tend to segregate renunciation and its institutionalized representatives from worldly society and orientations; they also largely minimize the overall impact of the ideal of renunciation and its representatives by investing both with very high prestige, on the one hand, but with only limited scope of power, on the other.

These mechanisms will be examined on three different levels: doctrinal, institutional-organizational, and cultural-symbolic. Focusing upon what is ostensibly an essentially marginal phenomenon — the radical virtuoso — will thus necessitate a rather broad investigation of Theravada Buddhism as a social and cultural system and hopefully prove to be, in turn, an invaluable vantage point from which to better appraise the civilizational dynamics of a world-negating religion.

RENUNCIATION AND RENOUNCERS IN CANONICAL BUDDHISM

The worldly contours of other-worldliness

A key problem in the interpretation of canonical Buddhism,² discussed here in necessarily simplified terms, is how to reconcile *nirvana* and *karma*, two seemingly antagonistic notions. Salvation in Buddhism is understood as the escape from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of births and rebirths in a life of impermanence and suffering. Such an escape is only possible by transcending all desire and, thus, the very root of all suffering. The road to salvation is one of ascetic and meditative discipline though, it must be stressed, not of mortification. Only through meditation can one hope to climb the various steps leading to perfection and to reach the state of *nirvana* — ultimate enlightenment, utter bliss and, at the same time, total detachment from the mundane. While the achievement of enlightenment is indeed oriented toward other-worldliness, it has been pointed out that this concept inherently implies a certain “worldliness in the very belief that man is perfectible and that perfection can be attained here and now.”³

Whereas *nirvana* points primarily to other-worldliness and renunciation, the notion of *karma* seems to indicate that there is a place in

Buddhism for a more worldly orientation. From the law of *karma* derives one's station on the path of salvation, the result of the merit one has accumulated during past and present lives. Furthermore, merit ensures the betterment of one's condition in both present and future existence primarily in worldly terms, such as wealth, health and power, and it does not in itself lead to *nirvana*, which is altogether beyond the cycle of rebirths. Nevertheless, the accumulation of merit cannot altogether be dispensed with even in the pursuit of salvation. For example, the same amount of merit is believed to be necessary to become a Buddha as to become a Cak-kavatti, a world-ruler, and Buddha-Gautama himself — the latest Buddha — is said to have had to choose between these two possible "careers." This is one of the most remarkable examples of how the ultimate in world-renunciation and the ultimate in worldly involvement are both antithetical and intimately connected in Buddhist thought.⁴

The opposition to mortification, the assumption of the perfectibility of man in the here-and-now, the tension between *nirvana* and *karma*, and between renunciation and worldly-involvement, all indicate that together with the systematic cultivation of renunciation, Buddhism entails a certain tolerance and even acknowledgement of worldliness. These are, in a sense, the worldly contours of its essentially other-worldly teachings. Their significance is most clearly evinced in the pains which doctrinal Buddhism takes to provide for a specific model of relationship between virtuoso and layman.

Virtuoso and layman

The built-in tension between *karma* and *nirvana*, between the striving for a better rebirth and the escape from the cycle of rebirths, is mitigated, if not solved, in a striking way: the quest for nirvana remains the realm of the virtuoso, who is able and willing to engage in the path of renunciation and mediation, while merit-accumulation, with no immediate soteriological relevance, provides "secondary goals" for others. What is involved here is a matter not merely of differentiation, but of hierarchy: those two strive for salvation are without doubt conceived of as superior to the layman.

One dramatic index of the disparate treatment of virtuosi and laymen is the contrast between the lay ethic, consisting of only 5

precepts, and the elaborate 227 precepts for monks. Lay Buddhism, however, does not remain without doctrinal sanction, and within the scriptural body, the two ethics — that of the monk and that of the layman — are far from being totally disconnected, as is evident from the following six points of doctrine: firstly, no one is barred from becoming a monk; one can elect to join, as well as leave, the Sangha at will.⁵ Second, precepts to be followed by the monk can be seen as a specification and amplification of the basic five injunctions for laymen.⁶ Third, there is an intermediary stage between the two sets of precepts — that of the ten precepts, involving a greater degree of renunciation than the five and thus permitting the layman to take upon himself, if he so wishes, a discipline closer to that of the monk.

A fourth element connecting monk and layman at the doctrinal level is the ambiguous definition of the former's vocation. While renunciation is his foremost concern, the preservation and correct transmission of the Buddha's teachings, as well as the survival of the monastic community, all demand a certain degree of worldly involvement. The tension between these two aspects of the monk's vocation became evident as early as the first century B.C.⁷ While the Buddha's emphasis was reported to have been on practice, the councils held at that time opted for preservation of his teachings. However, the issue as such was never conclusively settled. In fact, it intermeshed with another issue — that of "compassion" vs. "selfishness." Thus, the monk who concentrated exclusively on the quest for nirvana was deemed to be selfish for refusing to help others on both a humanitarian and spiritual level.⁸

Fifth, the doctrinal provision concerning the bestowal of gifts (*dana*) is also crucial in maintaining a connection and interaction between renouncers and laymen. The monk is said to provide the layman with a "field of merit," and, indeed, the most effective way for the latter to obtain merit is by materially supporting the former. The idiom here is not a commercial one; no goods or services are expected in return for the gift. The very fact of giving is what confers merit upon the layman; it is not the monk who does so. Yet, while it is worth noting that the idiom of the gift is neither commercial nor implies reciprocity, it is not yet analogous to that of the "free" gift between friends or equals. On the contrary, it involves

the donator's acknowledgement of the recipient's superiority.⁹ It also implies that the layman has at least a vested interest of some kind in this superiority and is not totally alienated from it.

A last doctrinal element which prevents too extreme a polarization between virtuoso and layman is the seemingly paradoxical compatibility between the Buddha's elevated teachings and what is usually conceived of as "popular" or even "primitive" beliefs in a whole pantheon of gods, spirits and demons as well as in "animistic" and magical practices. The attitude toward such beliefs in the canonical texts appears far from consistent, varying from total rejection to wholesale acceptance.¹⁰ The "orthodox" position, as understood by many, would seem to accept these beliefs as part of an overall cosmology, while denying them any Buddhist, soteriological significance; gods and demons have nothing to do with the quest for nirvana. At any rate, magical-cosmological elements coexist with more purely soteriological beliefs not only for laymen but for virtuosi as well, and there is enough ambiguity in the attitude of Buddhist canons toward magical beliefs and practices to prevent the issue from becoming a real line of demarcation between virtuosi and layman.¹¹

The virtuoso's position in the social order

As has been shown, doctrinal Buddhism is characterized by the existence of a double standard¹² — one which upholds a clear-cut distinction between virtuoso and layman, but also avoids total disconnection between the two in a variety of ways. This double standard enables the layman to cope, to a certain extent, with the extreme other-worldliness of the ideal of renunciation. It provides a certain degree of legitimation for lay activities, while at the same time unambiguously affirming the superiority of the virtuoso's pursuit of other-worldliness. What deserves special stress here, however, are those features of doctrinal Buddhism which contribute to defining and, at the same time, circumventing the social position of the virtuosi. The lay world, although undoubtedly deemed inferior, is allowed a significant degree of autonomy. But — and this is of crucial significance — it is never conceived as the locus of salvation. Neither is it supposed to model itself after the highest

Buddhist ideals; at no point is the principle of renunciation as such expected to govern laymen in worldly affairs, nor is the renouncer himself expected to be directly involved in the supervision and management of the social order. This makes virtuosi, as a consequence, a very special type of elite, combining a status of ultimate superiority with a narrowly defined involvement in and lack of control upon secular and collective life.

It will be shown that the doctrinal model of the relationship between virtuoso and layman has, to a large, extent, governed the actual interaction between the two as it evolved in Theravada societies. This model entails the main elements of the dominant mechanism regulating the attitude toward renunciation and renouncers in such countries — a mechanism which segregates between virtuosi and laymen (but does not disconnect them), and, while consistently upholding and reinforcing the virtuoso's ultimate superiority, largely neutralizes his impact upon lay matters. This mechanism will be examined now at the institutional-organizational level.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF RENUNCIATION

Buddhism seems to have originally had strong eremitical tendencies;¹³ the early followers of the Buddha were supposedly enjoined to become wandering mendicants or *bikkhus*. However, over a period of time, *bikkhus* became sedentary, their residence became permanent and lasting relationships with adjoining villages were established. While the mendicant-eremitical ideal did not entirely disappear in the process, the monastic strain became clearly predominant. Monasteries became so established that some scholars came to see in the Sangha the equivalent of a Buddhist "church." Nevertheless, and despite variations in formal organization in the different Theravada countries,¹⁴ the Sangha retained an essentially amorphous character, evident in the quasi-autonomy of individual monasteries at the local level, the low level of hierarchization and centralization, and the unabated tendency toward fissiparity throughout its history. This low level of organization, however, should not be taken to mean that the Sangha was weakly institutionalized. Rather, it is more in its interaction with wider

society than in its formal organizational features that its strong institutionalization is most evident. This interaction will be first considered from a macrosocietal point of view, starting with the Sangha's position in the political sphere.

Sangha and society: the macrosocietal perspective

Since the Sangha wielded no temporal authority and power of its own, it came to depend on external forces and especially on the willingness, ability and even initiative of the political center to ensure its internal cohesion and purity. Usually kings held a manifold stake in safeguarding the Sangha's purity; not only did it function for them, as for any layman, as a "field of merit," but it also represented a significant political force.¹⁵ Interest in both obtaining the Sangha's support and in containing its overall political activity within narrow limits led the rulers to embark in celebrated "campaigns of purification," where religious and political motives often converged. They also tried repeatedly to organize the Sangha along hierarchical lines which would make it easier to control than the loose community of quasi-autonomous units that it tended to be.¹⁶

If certainly not without political impact in a general sense, the Sangha did not become an independent nucleus of political power. It never vied with kings for authority upon worldly and political matters, even if it did try to influence or oppose rulers, especially in matters pertaining to Buddhism itself. Moreover, it never tried to impose itself as an autonomous, determinant force in the existing political framework, or even less, to propound an alternative form of political structure. Melford Spiro, writing about Burma, sees it as playing the role of a "middleman" between government and people, trying to protect the people from tyrannical rule, but also reconciling them with it.¹⁷ Moreover, sects and individual monasteries competed for the patronage of wealthy and powerful laymen who manipulated them, in turn, in accordance with their own political ends. Significantly, however — and this is congruent indeed with the doctrine of detachment from worldly affairs — the Sangha's political activity never amounted to the type of autonomous political power displayed, for example, by the Catholic Church in Western Europe.

In the economic sphere as well, the Sangha's activities remained relatively limited. Even when the *Vināya* interdictions concerning the handling of money and private property were transgressed, as they were in a most systematic and permanent manner in Ceylon's monastic landlordism, monks usually did not engage in trading or any kind of sustained economic entrepreneurship. This, however, did not prevent the Sangha from having tremendous implications for the economy, albeit indirectly, by receiving in the form of religious gifts a very important share of the population's material resources.¹⁸

A last aspect of the Sangha's macrosocietal significance to be pursued here stems from the development of Buddhism into a crucial dimension of national identity in Theravada countries.¹⁹ A certain paradox exists here, since these countries are well aware of being part of a wider, "multinational" Theravada complex. This intertwining of Buddhism with national identity became most evident in times of invasion and modern colonialism in Ceylon and Burma. The Sangha, on the whole, opposed the non-Buddhist establishment, but the extent to which monks could actually take part in political protest turned into a very salient issue, one unresolved to this very day, despite the unequivocal doctrinal disapproval of any form of political activism.²⁰ It is significant, from the point of view of this connection of Buddhism with national identity, that no cross-national organizational expression approximating that of a Buddhist "pope" has ever been produced.

From the macrosocietal point of view, then, the Sangha appears to be a highly revered institution of central national significance whose actual power is greatly circumvented. It tends to exert direct influence in the "religious" sphere exclusively, while having only indirect impact, the extent of which may vary at times, in other spheres. The resulting segregation of monks from major spheres of activity is not only compatible with their ideology but can also be understood as sustaining their special prestige by preserving the boundaries between them as carriers of revered cultural values and more mundane types of groups and interests. It remains to be seen whether the same pattern of segregation and the entailed imbalance between very high prestige, on the one hand, and limited scope of power, on the other, prevail at the local level as well.

Sangha and society: the local perspective

Without underestimating the broader macrosocietal implications of the Sangha, it is fair to say that the bulk of its day-to-day activities has been mostly locally-oriented and that the monastery has been an all-important institution in communal life. Despite some evidence of regional variation in the extent of prestige bestowed upon the monks, they are highly respected figures. Their involvement in local affairs can be divided into three general categories of activities: participation in certain lay rituals without, it must be noted, playing a mediating, priest-like role; the education of children and youth; and general counselling. While the first two categories have remained relatively stable historically, the third has varied in nature and scope, according to time and place. At its broadest, this counselling could address individual as well as communal problems, take the form of mere advice or of therapy, and remain strictly within the frame of reference of "higher" Buddhism or widen to include a whole gamut of "magical" and astrological practices.²¹

It is important to note that, although the monks have been drawn into interaction with laymen, sometimes to a great extent, their impact upon the latter and their involvement in lay affairs have been subject to limitation. Firstly, there have always been *bikkhus* condemning too great an involvement in lay life. Second, while participation in local activities may contribute to the monk's status in the eyes of the community, it may equally undermine it. The layman himself, though of course interested in the services provided, is well aware that the monk's seclusion contributes to his spiritual worth and thus in turn to the value of whatever counselling he provides. Thirdly, involvement is not only limited in scope, but in kind. Whenever monks do become involved in worldly affairs, they do so as "outsiders," as a third party having no personal interests at stake, and laymen expect this of them. Finally, in Burma and Thailand, for example, direct involvement with the values and life of renunciation is delegated to a small core of permanent monks, to youth (before they assume the usual duties of an adult member of the community) and to the elderly, whose participation in social life is on the decline anyway.²²

With regard to dependence upon external sources of power, the same holds true at the local level as it does at the macrosocietal one: laymen can be said to represent a permanent force of control upon monks even if this control does not take as dramatic a form as the kings' "campaigns of purification."²³ The definition of the monk's role, as it is regulated, at least in part, by the layman, presents an interesting blend of ritualization and flexibility.²⁴ While their renunciation remains very real in the sexual sphere, material deprivation is not essential to their role in the layman's eyes: monks in general live a life of relative material abundance and, ironically, of greater comfort than most villagers. Most important, they are allowed a significant leeway in the interpretation of their role. The fact that many monks are as little desirous of *nirvana* and as interested in the accumulation of merit and a better rebirth as laymen has not impaired the basic pattern of their relationship. Furthermore, monks are expected to conform only to minimal standards of knowledge and spiritual achievement; they can engage in various occult arts, even if contrary to doctrine; they are given relatively great freedom of movement; and finally, as mentioned before, their involvement in communal affairs can vary. At the same time, they must conform to precise rules of appearance and deportment.²⁵ Indeed, what seems crucial in the layman's eyes is more the monk's conformity to this highly stylized image than the precise extent to which he practices the "Middle Way," the way to full renunciation. It seems that monks are not fully required to adhere to the highest values; it is enough if they symbolize them. What is crucial is that the cleavage between monks and laymen be maintained, and this cleavage depends on their retaining sufficient potency as symbols of renunciation.

Within this context, the gift-relationship appears to play a significant role. While *dana* is officially intended to provide material support to monks striving for salvation, in actual fact it generally bears no direct relation to the monk's actual material needs, since there is often a surplus of gifts, sometimes reaching staggering amounts. But this surplus itself, as has often been observed, acquires important meaning for the layman; not only is the extent of his gift-bearing an indicator of his "store of merit," it also has become an important component in his social status as a form of "conspicuous

consumption;’’²⁶ the more luxurious his gifts, the more he is respected by his fellow villagers. It can be pointed out, in addition, that the surplus in gifts acquires important meaning with regard to the monk as well, as a form, this time, of “conspicuous non-consumption.” One may say that as long as it is not consumed, this surplus testifies to the monk’s spiritual status for the very reason that it poses a constant challenge to his renunciation. The gift, then, is an important mechanism in sustaining the monk’s symbolization of renunciation, an on-going process in which the layman, it must be emphasized, appears to play as large a part as the monk. Furthermore, because the gift relationship contributes to reaffirm both the connection and distinction between monk and layman, it can be said to epitomize the segregative process at the interactional microsociological level.

Other-worldliness in the world: the institutional solution

On the basis of the above, it is clear that the basic mechanism of segregation already apparent at the doctrinal level is also found at the institutional-organizational level from both a macrosocietal and more localized point of view. Furthermore, the ultimate prestige and supremacy of the renouncer is consistently acknowledged and reinforced, while his overall impact upon lay matters is kept within bounds and, in fact, greatly minimized. The above analysis has also brought out the fact that the ideal of world-renunciation has inevitably suffered erosion through institutionalization: monks are sometimes greatly involved in worldly matters and, in general, more often steeped in the accumulation of merit than in the pursuit of *nirvana*, or to use Melford Spiro’s terms, rather geared to “kam-matic” than “nibbanic” Buddhism.²⁷

De jure outsiders, monks have become very much a part of one same social community with laymen; yet, an actual overlap between the Sangha and the wider, primordial community, be it defined in terms of kinship, region, ethnicity or nationality, has never developed. Neither membership in this community nor activity on its behalf has ever come to be conceived as a necessary prerequisite in the pursuit of salvation, and the primordial community has never been considered the arena for the implementation

of Buddhist ideals. For both monks and laymen, it seems, it has been sufficient that balance and interaction between the Sangha and the wider community has continued to follow its prescribed pattern. Furthermore, despite the erosion of the ideal of renunciation and the compromises it entails, the monks seem to have retained sufficient validity as symbols of renunciation, not the least, as explained above, as a result of the mechanism of segregation. The Sangha displays, therefore, a complex combination of other-worldly and worldly, or “supra-mundane” and “mundane” orientations. It is important, however, to note that whatever the extent of this combination, not only was its scope of application kept within certain limits but, most significantly, it never received any ultimate legitimation as such and was never perceived as a valid cultural alternative to the normative other-worldliness of doctrinal Buddhism. This and the other, aforementioned characteristics of the institutionalization of renunciation in Theravada countries will have to be taken into account when assessing the radical virtuosi’s position in the “magnetic field” of Sangha and laity. At this point, however, attention is turned to the mechanisms which evolved to cope with the extreme other-worldliness of Buddhism at the cultural-symbolic level.²⁸

RENUNCIATION AND THE HIERARCHY OF SYMBOLICAL ORIENTATIONS

“High” Buddhism and magical-animistic orientations

“High” Buddhism — that is, Buddhism as defined by the Pāli canons — appears to coexist rather comfortably in Theravada countries with a gamut of “lower,” “magico-animistic” beliefs and practices. This has become a salient issue in the scholarly literature, giving rise to significant diverging opinions concerning the number and nature of the different types or levels of beliefs, as well as the nature of the relationship between them.²⁹ While no new attempt will be made here to solve these issues, attention will be drawn to a major structural principle of the symbolic system which may be said to sustain the relatively peaceful coexistence of heterogeneous symbolic orientations.

Rejecting the explanation of the persistence of “lower” beliefs as historical residual, a number of contemporary studies point to

systemic, functional relationships between the various categories of beliefs. A general and oft-repeated hypothesis is that of a functional complementarity between doctrinal Buddhism and other, "lower" beliefs, each fulfilling different psychological needs; while the former's emphasis is on other-worldly and distant goals, the latter appear to cater to this-worldly and more immediate needs.³⁰

As opposed to this approach, which tends to explain the comfortable coexistence of "higher" and "lower" cultural-symbolic orientations by stressing their difference in function, a number of other approaches tend to explain this phenomenon by indicating a blurring of differences between the two orientations and thus a mitigation of antagonism. Certain field studies have indicated that both "high" and "low" beliefs and practices are in constant juxtaposition and interplay.³¹ Further, there is much evidence that even purely Buddhist symbols and acts can be apprehended in a magical mode.³² Monks themselves are liable to be motivated by magical-animistic beliefs when fulfilling what would seem to be Buddhist injunctions par excellence.³³ The distinction between other-worldly and this-worldly or "higher" and "lower" orientations is also blurred at the motivational level by the fact that one can expect immediate, worldly benefits from primarily other-worldly Buddhist behavior. For example, presenting monks with alms, considered a practice in selfless giving, not only confers merit but also the general approval of fellow laymen, and to spend some time in the Sangha improves one's social prospects upon returning to lay life. It has even been argued by J. Halverson that seemingly different beliefs actually answer a same, general need for explanation and that "the peasant who moves with equanimity from one explanation to the other gives decisive weight to their psychological similarity rather than to their ideological incompatibility."³⁴

These approaches, however, do not account for the special reverence in which whatever most clearly and exclusively pertains to "high" Buddhism is held. The supremacy of the Buddha and his teachings is constantly reaffirmed and paid tribute to, totally unhindered by "lower" practices and beliefs.³⁵ "Top" values are recognized as such, whatever their actual enactment and despite the blurred distinction between them and other beliefs in certain motivational planes. The hierarchy of beliefs is clear and

acknowledged, and this hierarchy, which is not (or not only) a matter of functional differences, is what prevents a complete overlap and similarity in the motivational implications of the different symbolical orientations. The part played by this hierarchical structure in the relation between different types of beliefs and orientations will be pointed out below, but attention must first be drawn to another issue, that of the coexistence of "high" Buddhism, not with magical-animistic beliefs and practices, but with values and norms operative in "profane" spheres of social life.³⁶

"High" Buddhism and social norms

The hypothesis has been advanced by a number of scholars of an affinity between the emphasis in "high" Buddhism on renunciation, self-restraint and selfless giving, on the one hand, and social norms of reciprocity prevailing in village interaction, on the other. In S. G. Tambiah's terms, the former would be an "idealization and extension of, and a contrast to" the latter. Magical-animistic orientations, in contrast, would rather correspond to the aspect of power relations and manipulative behavior in social interaction.³⁷ Variations of the same argument appear in the works of Jane Bun-nag, Michael Ames and Manning Nash,³⁸ all of whom suggest that the highest Buddhist values, basically asocial or even antisocial, have an affinity to basic principles of social interaction, to normative constraints and to moral bonds which are of a profane nature and tend to transcend divisive, particularistic interests.

Yet, while the affinity between high Buddhist values and certain social norms might be of interest, this should not blur the strong distinction between the two. As Tambiah has put it, the relation may be one of idealization and extension, but it is also one of contrast. It is possible to perceive this in the "Durkheimian" fashion as the contrast between the perfect and the imperfect: renunciation, then, would appear as the highest and most purified form of values which men can enact only imperfectly in everyday life.³⁹ It seems, however, that if Buddhist values do not govern the villagers' life entirely, it is not only because of imperfection and conflict in social interaction, but also because there are alternate codes of conduct which have a force of their own, and which laymen can follow

discriminately depending on the type of interaction they are engaged in.⁴⁰ For example, the transactions laymen conduct with monks are not the same as commercial relations—or, for that matter, any type of transactions they conduct with fellow laymen. Thus, they can orient themselves to different normative codes when engaged in different types of transactions.

The segregative and neutralizing implications of hierarchy

Since there seems to be evidence of both similarity (or affinity) and contrast in the relation between “high” Buddhism and other symbolic orientations, be they magical-animistic or social-normative, neither in itself can explain the ease of the coexistence between these orientations. The argument offered here is that the hierarchy which is established between them—in the case of magical beliefs and practices as well as of social, normative codes, and whatever the precise extent of affinity or contrast entailed—plays an important part in sustaining this compatibility. The availability of “lower” codes does not contest the legitimacy of the “higher” ones, although it certainly circumvenes the total scope of their direct translation into everyday life. On the other hand, the sociocultural centrality of “higher” Buddhist codes can only be maintained at the cost of certain constraints allowing alternate, if subordinate, symbolic orientations to thrive alongside. Thus, the very hierarchy which upholds their supremacy is also what ensures their segregation from the lower normative levels; enshrined at the very apex of the hierarchy of cultural orientations, the highest Buddhist values can be both revered and kept at bay. The total scope of their potency is limited and lower normative levels are kept autonomous and safe from their direct impact.

Hence, one can see that, on the cultural-symbolic level, as on the doctrinal and institutional levels, the characteristic Theravada Buddhist mechanism for coming to terms with the extreme other-worldliness of “high” Buddhism is to be found. Here again, this mechanism entails segregation, as well as imbalance between very high prestige, on the one hand, and limited, even minimized, scope of power, on the other. Its efficacy is most evident when one points out what it has not allowed to happen. While the “worldlier” orien-

tations have been allowed significant freedom of operation, they have never achieved, neither alone nor in combination with “higher,” other-worldly ones, a basis of ultimate legitimacy of their own. Despite the constant juxtaposition and interplay of the various types of orientations mentioned above, no intermediate plane combining more or less other-worldly orientations has become self-sufficient and autonomous. The “lower” orientations have not undermined the supremacy of the “higher” ones and the “higher” ones have never been dependent on anchorage in the “lower” ones to sustain their own cultural validity. The cultural-symbolic system does not provide, therefore, any type of legitimate model, ideal or prototype for a true and autonomous integration of other-worldly and worldly orientations.

It will be shown that the mechanism analyzed above can help to explain why virtuosi of a more extreme and radical type than organized monks remained confined to a marginal and ambiguous position in Theravada societies.

The Radical Virtuoso: Excellence and Marginality

Radical virtuosi and sectarianism

It is evident that the *bikkhu*, originally called upon to forsake all normal social bonds, eventually became enmeshed in but another network of social relations, both within the Sangha and without it, in relationships formed with laymen. What became of the rather asocial, eremitical ideal in the midst of these developments? Hermits and wandering mendicants became a quantitatively negligible phenomenon and yet did not entirely disappear. Within the Sangha itself, tension between more and less socialized forms of renunciation persisted. Out of the differences in emphasis on practice or on study which arose as early as the first Buddhist councils in Ceylon, there emerged a distinction between monks devoting themselves to *ganthadura*—the vocation of study and teaching—and to *vipassanadhura*—the vocation of meditation. To this was related yet another distinction which overlapped only partially: that between *arannavasi* or *vanavasi* (forest-dwellers) and *gamavasi* (dwellers in monasteries in towns and villages).⁴¹ Forest-dwellers were not

necessarily hermits, but they lived a more secluded life than *gamavasi*, individually or in groups, devoting most of their time to meditation and keeping their contact with lay life to a minimum.⁴² Forest-dwellers, however, were always a marginal and somewhat deviant minority vis à vis a dominant majority of monks opting for greater involvement in lay society.⁴³ The distinction between *ganthadura* and *vipassanadhura* seems to have retained its significance more than that between forest- and town-dwellers.⁴⁴ The former two are still valid categories today, designating differences between individual monks as well as between monasteries or entire branches of the Sangha to the extent to which they emphasize lay-oriented activities as opposed to meditation. Again, only a minority of monks can be said to be dedicated to meditation.

Radical renouncers, engaged in the single-minded pursuit of *nibbana* through meditation, either in total isolation or forest hermitages, might have been seen in this context as extreme “sectarians,” exposed to unavoidable antagonism on the part of the overwhelming majority of “institutionalized virtuosi” who stress “teaching” and interaction with the lay world. Such a statement would be, however, only partially adequate, and, in order to qualify it, it is necessary to better understand the nature of “sectarianism” in the Theravada Buddhist Sangha.

It is often stated that splits within the Sangha cannot be designated as sectarian and that they arose over matters of discipline rather than doctrine. As a result, the seriousness of divisions within the Sangha has been somewhat underestimated, perhaps by implied contrast with Christianity where sects and other divisions originate most often on the basis of doctrinal divergences. It must be noted, however, that whatever the nature of the issues involved, the intensity of the controversies and of the ensuing hostilities leave no doubt as to their importance.⁴⁵ One can add that distinctions such as those between forest- and town-dwellers or *ganthadura* and *vipassanadhura* can hardly be dismissed as merely disciplinary. Further, if a Way or a Method is the central tenet of a religious creed, as it is in Buddhism, consequent controversies on matters of discipline bear no less gravity than controversies on matters of dogma would in a creed in which doctrine is stressed.

What seems to have conferred importance to what could appear to be mainly differences in practice was the degree to which these could be taken to symbolize steadfastness to the original teachings of the Way as expressed in the *Vināya* and to a distant past of pristine purity in the pursuit of salvation. The man who achieved enlightenment—the *arahat*—remained the ideal, and he who isolated himself for meditation and self-restraint, only temporarily joining the monastery or going about begging for alms, was understood to be closer to the ultimate goal. Whatever the actual enactment of this ideal, it never totally disappeared as the ultimate yardstick for the evaluation of one's spiritual standing. Anti-institutional, or rather a-institutional as it may have been, it played a part in the emergence of reformist monasteries, in the relation between these and other branches of the Sangha, and in the interaction between monks and laymen, although in no simple fashion, as will be shown below.

The ambivalence toward radical virtuosī

To state that there is a supreme ideal does not necessarily imply that there is a consensus of feelings about it, nor that these feelings are monolithic. Inherent to the definition of an ideal is its transcendental nature, that is, its being "beyond" and difficult to reach. This might inspire emulation as well as instill feelings of inadequacy. Some of the complexity of the psychological processes involved is conveyed by the contradictory indications to be found concerning the attitude both monks and laymen have assumed historically towards those individuals or branches of the Sangha trying to better approximate the ideal.

In eighteenth-century Ceylon, for example, according to Kitsire Malalgoda, wealthy established monasteries were discomforted by the appearance of reformist branches, their display of a greater commitment to ascetic ideals, and the consequent preference of laymen to give alms to those they considered truer to the ideal. On the other hand, forest-monks in earlier times, while enjoying awe and respect for exemplifying the ultimate Buddhist ideals, did not attract gifts. Malalgoda attributes this to their "renouncing of all social ties and their consequent lack of social significance."⁴⁶ Ac-

cording to W. Geiger, radical ascetics were highly revered and presented with gifts in medieval Ceylon.⁴⁷ As for more modern times, Gananath Obeyesekere remarks that some laymen prefer to give alms to *Amarapura* monks believed to lead a more ascetic life. Furthermore, hermit monks are pursued with gifts to the most secluded spots.⁴⁸ This phenomenon seems to prevail in Burma as well, where magnificent monasteries stand abandoned, erected as endowments to some withdrawn holy man who has not the least intention of inhabiting them. Jane Bunnag recorded great ambivalence and suspicion in Central Thailand toward monks leaving the monastery only temporarily to adopt, usually for a period of a few weeks, a wandering life most approximate to that of the early Buddhist mendicants. In general, she found that the mostly highly regarded monk is not the recluse dedicated to self-improvement but the *bikkhu* who ministers to the needs of lay society.⁴⁹ Other contemporary studies tend to confirm this attitude and report varying degrees of resentment against monks withdrawing themselves from communal life.⁵⁰

Attitudes towards the more zealous observants of the Way seem thus to vary greatly, but whatever systematic pattern might underlie such variance cannot be assessed for want of a wider range of empirical data. There is enough evidence, however, that radical virtuosi in Theravada Buddhist countries can be both revered for their "ultra-orthodoxy" and shunned for their deviance from what came to be accepted as the more "orthodox" path of renunciation, as represented by monks remaining in closer touch with lay society.⁵¹ The ambivalence toward these radical virtuosi can probably be taken to reflect the reluctance of Buddhist society to be reminded of the gap between it and its supreme ideals. Furthermore, these radical virtuosi represent a threat to the *modus vivendi* worked out, with the help of the mechanism delineated above at the doctrinal, institutional and symbolic levels, between monk and layman and between the Buddhist ideals and more worldly orientations. The institutionalized, highly socialized model of renunciation provides the layman with a relatively easy means of accumulating merit and of participating in the renouncer's pursuit of salvation without interfering with his own worldly activity. In deviating from this model, radical virtuosi appear to disavow not only institu-

tionalized renunciation, but also a division of labor which seems to have become essential to the legitimacy and workings of the Theravada social order. The radical virtuoso's stance is no less problematic for both monks and laymen at the cultural-symbolic level: a crucial aspect of the system seems to be precisely its structure (rather than its content), allowing the interplay and check-and-balance between "higher" and "lower" orientations within the framework of an explicit hierarchy which defines their differential overall cultural status. To commit oneself to the ideal of renunciation alone from amongst the pool of symbolical orientations thus becomes a form of deviance, although it may be called a "positive" deviance: far from involving a transgression of society's highest values, it consists in overly adhering to them.

The impotency of radicalism

While the challenge posed by radical virtuosi to the mechanisms coping with the extreme other-worldliness of Buddhist ideals can explain the ambivalence toward them, it must be noted that this ambivalence was never transformed into outright and sustained condemnation and that radical virtuosi never came to embody a full-fledged heterodoxy. One can only speculate whether, given a stronger centralization and power of control, the Sangha might have forced them into such a position. Second, while radical virtuosi played a part in the emergence of reformist monasteries and sectarian branches of the Sangha,⁵² their influence never reached beyond the Sangha into wider society: they never brought any change either in the basic pattern of interaction between Sangha and society or in worldly spheres of activity. One might simply consider this to be consistent with the tenacious clinging of these radical virtuosi to the renunciatory stance. However, there is no dearth of cases in other cultural settings where great religious virtuosi, of either an ascetic or mystical bent, were paradoxically driven out of their isolation precisely because of the very strength of their spiritual conviction, which begged to be expressed and communicated. A second and well-known aspect of this phenomenon is that the virtuoso's original message was bound to undergo transformation in the very process of communication and that this could

come to represent a significant source of cultural change and innovation. Nothing of the like happened in the case of the Theravada Buddhist virtuosi, and this can possibly be understood by reference to the consistency and efficacy with which the mechanism of segregation has been working in Theravada societies. No interaction or interrelation of other-worldly and this-worldly orientations, either at the institutional or symbolic level, has ever received ultimate legitimation as such, and such an interaction seems necessary to encourage the emergence of an alternative type of radical virtuosi, intent on having an impact upon others and the social order. Correspondingly, the population at large has had no expectations that this type of man would emerge or that any effort would be made to initiate change in this world on the basis of the highest, extremely other-worldly, Buddhist ideals.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to show that the apparently delicate, and yet historically quite resilient, *modus vivendi* between renunciation and society in Theravada countries is achieved through what appears to be a consistent mechanism, diffuse and manifest in all major spheres and levels of social life.

Within such an arrangement, enforced at the doctrinal, institutional and cultural-symbolic levels, radical renouncers outdoing the tamed virtuosity of organized monkhood have been found to be in an ambiguous position. Attitudes toward them appear to vary; they can inspire suspicion and disapproval as well as the greatest awe. They are the true representative of the ideal of renunciation in its strictest sense, and their very existence reinforces the credibility of the Buddhist ideological system as a whole. But it also reminds both monks and laymen of the distance between them and their own ultimate ideals. As such, the radical virtuosi represent a challenge to the *modus vivendi* worked out between monks and laymen and between Buddhist ideals and more worldly orientations.

Yet, while the influence of radical renouncers was felt in the emergence of reformist and sectarian tendencies within the Sangha, these virtuosi never brought about any significant change either in the basic pattern of interaction between Sangha and society, or in

lay society itself and in spheres of worldly activity. This can be understood by referring to the aforementioned mechanism, or more precisely, to the fact that an alternative way of coping with other-worldly ideals was not allowed to evolve. Despite the constant interplay of other-worldly and worldlier orientations in Theravada societies, no linkage between them ever received ultimate legitimation as such. Such a linkage would seem to be a necessary precondition for the emergence of a type of radical virtuosi intent on having an impact upon others and the social order and, more generally, for the initiation of any change in this world on the basis of what are acknowledged to be the highest ideals, whatever the extent of their original other-worldliness.

Finally, the more general, theoretical and comparative interest of certain aspects of this study is worth pointing out:

(1) The analysis of the mechanisms which evolved in Theravada Buddhist societies to cope with the other-worldliness of their own ideals clearly indicates that even the highest values can occupy a position subject to limitations and constraints, rather than being the omnipotent and non-negotiable entities they are often taken to be. To say that something is the highest ideal, even if this is coupled with a high degree of cultural consensus, does not predict the place this ideal is made or allowed to occupy in social life.

(2) While the incompatibility between renunciation and the worldly orientations which normally pervade everyday life is extreme, the existence in any society of values which can be maintained only by being kept immune from the interests, contingencies, and uncertainties of social life seems to be a common, perhaps even a universal phenomenon. The example was provided here of a mechanism, or strategy through which such immunity could be achieved. It is quite plausible that further research in different cultural settings would point to strategies of a different kind.

(3) The Theravada Buddhist radical virtuoso exemplifies a form of deviance, or dissent, which paradoxically stems from cleaving to ideals whose supremacy is acknowledged in the rest of society. He is not the carrier of alternative ideological contents, and the challenge he poses is not so much to the contents, but rather to the structure of the cultural system as sustained by the mechanisms coping with the extreme other-worldliness of "high" Buddhism.

(4) Radical virtuosi achieve varying positions and degrees of influence in different cultural settings. The Theravada Buddhist radical virtuoso, while representing ideals of the utmost centrality in his society, has achieved only a marginal position and minimal influence. Factors of both an institutional and symbolic nature have been brought out to explain the weakness and ambiguity of his social position. It would be interesting to investigate the impact of these or corresponding factors in a comparative framework.

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¹ Werblowsky (1976: 92).

² By canonical Buddhism, I refer to the Pāli canon, set down in writing in Ceylon around 20 B.C. and adopted later in Burma, Siam and Cambodia. It consists of *Tripitaka* (three baskets): *Vināya*, essentially the Sangha's rules of discipline; *Sutta*, sermons and discourses of the Buddha; and *Abdhimma*, commentary on these discourses. The Pāli canon is not historically homogeneous, but was codified for the most part in the reign of Aśoka (c. 272-232 B.C.).

³ Horner (1936: 316). Horner even suggests that "the arahān theory was needed to fill a blank. Men, or monks, were no longer content to think of the goal...as *samparayika*, belonging to other worlds; otherwise why the weight attached to the goal as attainable *ditthe va dhamme*, here and now?" Dunnington (1974: 14), on the other hand, notes that nirvana can be taken as being reached here and now or as occurring at the death of the *arahān*, which is not followed by rebirth.

⁴ An analogous ambiguity lies in the notion of *dhamma*: ...it is recognized both as the Law which regulates and governs the totality of existence and, at the same time, as the Truth which enables men to break free from the limitations which existence imposes. *Dhamma*, in other words, was taken to be the source, of both order in the world and salvation from it (Reynolds, 1972: 15).

⁵ This open and voluntary access to the highest religious status must be understood in its historical context, as contrasting with the Brahminic emphasis on caste monopoly and exclusivism. Even the distinction between monk and layman has not always been crucial with regard to the ultimate soteriological goals; laymen too are known to have become *arahats* in the Buddha's lifetime.

⁶ This point was developed in Obeyesekere (1968).

⁷ See Bareau (1955) and Rahula (1956: 158).

⁸ Even Buddhas and *arahats* are not immune from these basic dichotomies and the tensions involved. Buddha-Guātama himself—when contrasted with the Bodhisattvas, who, according to Mahayana Buddhism, were believed to voluntarily delay their Buddhahood in order to help others reach salvation—appears as more selfish since he taught salvation but did not assume any direct soteriological role. See Conze (1953).

⁹ Here, I disagree with Michael Ames (1966) who, correctly stressing the non-reciprocal nature of the *dāna*, not only in doctrine but in actuality as well, and seeking a correspondence between types of exchange in the secular and the ritual-religious spheres, yet sees *dāna* as analogous to gifts between equals—as distinct from bribes to superiors and fines to inferiors.

¹⁰ See Masson (1942).

¹¹ The *arahat* himself exemplifies this ambiguity: in the course of his exceptional mental and spiritual progress, he is also said to attain extraordinary powers, as natural by-products of his asceticism and spiritual worth. At the same time, exer-

cise of these powers might hinder the holy man in his attainment of his final goal and might be confused by laymen with vulgar magical practices. See, for example, Tambiah (1970: 48-51).

¹² The term "double standard" is used here devoid of whatever pejorative connotations it has acquired in Western ethical discourse. Another term, suggested by R. J. Z. Werblowsky (1977: 126), and perhaps more neutral from this point of view, is "two-tiered religiosity."

¹³ See Bechert (1970) and Dutt (1962). For a concise account of the general historical development of the Sangha, see Tambiah (1970: Ch. V).

¹⁴ Principles of social organization prevalent in wider society clearly permeated the Sangha, most evidently in its pattern of recruitment. In Ceylon, recruitment by caste began to evolve in its early stages of development; monasteries were allocated stable sources of income and landed property; succession to headship of the temple and its property became tied to property and family interests; and monkhood became a life-time status to which one was destined by family decision at a young age. Conversely, Burma and Thailand remained true to the principle of a Sangha transcending social distinctions and remaining open and egalitarian in its recruitment, and monkhood retained there a voluntary and most often temporary character. The Sangha in Thailand attained a higher level of formal organization than in other Theravada countries. See Bechert (1970); Evers (1967 and 1968); Gombrich (1971: Ch. VIII); Ryan (1953).

¹⁵ See Ferguson (1978); Mendelson (1975); Smith (ed.) (1978); Tambiah (1973a).

¹⁶ This was more successful, especially in the modern period, in Burma and Thailand than in Ceylon, where stronger local interests and the practice of monastic landlordism presented greater obstacles. Centralization has known the longest continuity in Thailand; however, the existence of a formal organizational structure and its close collaboration with the political center did not automatically entail its penetration and functioning down to the local level. See Mendelson (1964: 87).

¹⁷ Spiro (1971: 378-382).

¹⁸ For some quantitative estimates (up to 40 percent in Burma), see Spiro (1971: 459).

¹⁹ See Bechert (1973).

²⁰ See Smith (1965).

²¹ The broadest range of services seems to be found in present-day Thailand, where the government even tries to use monks as local agents in the implementation of its modernization policies. See Kaufman (1960); Mulder (1968); Pfanner and Ingersoll (1962).

²² For an interesting Christian equivalent of this connection between male youth and the community's highest religious values, see Trexler (1974). On the status of the *upasaka* in the community, see Obeyesekere (1968).

²³ Concrete evidence of the control operated by laymen on monks in Thailand is the recognition system maintained by village congregations, parallel to the system of royal titles (Tambiah, 1970: 109).

²⁴ See Bunnag (1973: 181-183).

²⁵ This is to the extent that one can say that laymen often worship the robe rather than the monk as a person. Even "bogus monks," i.e., those who only pretend to be monks and actually engage in sinful and corrupt behavior, can continue to receive material support from laymen because they are clothed in the yellow robe, the symbol of sanctity.

²⁶ At the same time, it has the indirect effect of diminishing differences of wealth in the community. See Morman (1966: 153).

²⁷ Spiro (1971: Pts. I and II).

²⁸ For reasons of space the consideration of the history of Buddhist kingship (i.e., the capacity of "high" Buddhism to play a role in the definition and legitimation of wordly and even political structures) had to be omitted from the present essay.

²⁹ For example, M. Spiro (1971) distinguishes between "nibbanic" (soteriological-normative), "kammatic" (soteriological-non-normative) and "apotropaic" (non-soteriological) levels. W. L. King (1965) distinguishes between "high," "low" and "medium" Buddhism and, further, between seven cultic layers defined by their distance from the central ideal, nirvana.

³⁰ See Ames (1964) and Obeyesekere (1968).

³¹ See Ames (1966) and Nash (1966: 112). Both stress the sequential aspect of this interplay.

³² See Tambiah's (1968) example of the magical power attributed to the recitation of Pāli sacred verses. See King (1965) on the magical aspects of the worship of Buddha himself.

³³ See Terwiell (1976).

³⁴ Halverson (1978).

³⁵ This point is most forcefully conveyed in Ames (1964).

³⁶ I will not deal here with the "Weberian" approach to this issue, which tries to evaluate the transformative capacities of religious-cultural orientations and their potential for translation into spheres of this-worldly activity. Weber's own conclusions on this potential in the case of Buddhism, which he tended to underestimate, have since been contested. However, the various arguments advanced in this regard have left unexplored the implications that high Buddhism as such, as epitomized in the ideal of renunciation, might have for norms governing laymen in their interaction with each other in profane spheres of life. See Bellah (1963); Spiro (1971: 453-460); Tambiah (1973b).

³⁷ Tambiah (1968: 119).

³⁸ Ames (1966); Bunnag (1973: 178); Nash (1966: 113).

³⁹ See Durkheim's analysis of the relation between religious asceticism and the asceticism which is the condition of any social order (1965: 350).

⁴⁰ See, for example, L. M. Hanks (1962: 1247) on the principle of power he found at play alongside that of merit in the regulation of social interaction in Thai society. In a sociological setting more akin to the Indian one, K. David (1973) analyzes the coexistence of three different normative codes which actors follow discriminately depending on the type of relationship in which they are engaged.

⁴¹ Rahula (1956: 196).

⁴² Gombrich (1971: 270).

⁴³ The historiographic issue of the identity of the "wayward monks," purged out of the Sangha in Burma in the eleventh century and sometimes identified with forest-dwelling monks, is suggestive in this regard. See Mendelson (1975: 36, 46-52).

⁴⁴ Within the *Syam Nikaya* in Ceylon, the *Malvatta* and *Asgirya* branches are said to represent respectively the *gamavasi* and *arannavasi* traditions. In fact, however, *Asgirya* monks live in villages and towns no less than *Malvatta* monks.

⁴⁵ Mendelson (1975: 27).

⁴⁶ Malalgoda (1976: 19, 60).

⁴⁷ Geiger (1960: 202).

⁴⁸ Obeyesekere (1968: 38). See also Ames (1964).

⁴⁹ Bunnag (1973: 55).

⁵⁰ See, for example, Mulder (1968: 41).

⁵¹ The ambivalence toward the radical virtuoso should not be confounded with that existing toward institutionalized virtuosos, coming to the fore mostly when the latter's integrity is in doubt. See Spiro (1971: 414).

⁵² See Carrithers (1979).

MANIFESTAZIONI DEL SIMBOLISMO ASSIALE NELLE TRADIZIONI CINESI ANTICHE*

RICCARDO M. FRACASSO

La definizione e la conquista di un centro/*axis mundi*, nucleo aggregativo di una eventuale struttura cosmologica e punto di congiunzione tra i sovrapposti piani di esistenza,¹ sono (sia che esso venga localizzato nella sfera esterna, sia che venga interiorizzato) un tema archetipico,² costante ed universale.

Il complesso simbolismo del centro ed i numerosi problemi ad esso connessi sono già stati affrontati, per esteso e sotto varie angolazioni da numerosi autori,³ tanto da rendere non necessario il raccogliere e ridiscutere ancora una volta le conclusioni raggiunte.

Ci si è proposti con questa nota di dare semplicemente un contributo sinologico specifico al problema generale dibattuto dalla storia delle religioni presentando alcune manifestazioni 'esterne' del suddetto simbolismo, riscontrabili in alcune fonti letterarie/iconografiche pre-Han ed Han e fino ad oggi mai affrontate da nessuno coi necessari rigore e completezza,⁴ quando non addirittura trascurate.

1.1. *Preliminari. Le fonti*

I riferimenti più palesi e compiuti al simbolismo assiale sono contenuti principalmente in quattro opere, che hanno costituito la trama di base della nostra indagine:

a) il MTTC, ascrivibile secondo le varie opinioni ad un periodo compreso tra il V° e il III° secolo a.C.;⁵ Esso ci dà la prima descrizione dei monti del *K'un-lun* che, se pur non connotata con precisione, è purtuttavia preziosissima in quanto unica testimonianza 'autoctona', precedente cioè all'irruzione delle numerose influenze indopuraniche⁶ giunte in Cina dal VI° sec.a.C.

b) lo HNT, in particolare la sezione IV (*Chui-hsing hsün*/ 'Insegnamenti sulla superficie terrestre'), ascrivibile alla metà del secondo secolo a.C.,⁷ che dà una descrizione dettagliata della geografia simbolica del *K'un-lun* e che denota con chiarezza l'avvenuto inserimento delle sovracitate influenze indiane.

c) 1o SHC, opera singolare e a sè stante, composta da tre strati testuali distribuiti su un arco di sette secoli (dal IV° secolo a.C. al III° d.C.)⁸ e che offre tre distinte descrizioni del *K'un-lun*, corrispondenti ad ognuno dei successivi periodi di compilazione. La descrizione che occupa i 2/3 della sezione XI può indiscutibilmente essere considerata come la più completa in nostro possesso;

d) le 'Odi di Ch'u' (*Ch'u-tz'u*), giunteci purtroppo solo nella tarda redazione di Wang I (II° sec. d.C.)⁹ ma che possono dare un'idea forse non soverchiamente distorta di varie credenze 'primitive' diffuse intorno al III° secolo a.C.¹⁰ nel regno meridionale, a cultura sciamanica, di Ch'u. Conseguentemente alla struttura poetica e spesso criptica dei testi, i riferimenti ai varî temi sono i più frammentari e oscuri; ad essi ci siamo quindi riferiti solo saltuariamente. Mentre tutte e quattro le fonti parlano più o meno diffusamente della montagna cosmica,¹¹ solo due di esse (HNT e SHC) contengono notizie riguardo ad un albero del centro, detto *Chien-mu*.

Lo SHC contiene inoltre, come si vedrà più innanzi, anche dei riferimenti ad altri elementi assiali, complementari od ipostatizzati, in una quantità insospettata e fino ad ora mai presi in considerazione.

1.2. *Categorie simboliche fondamentali*

I tratti costitutivi e morfologici del generale simbolismo assiale possono essere raggruppati, per facilitare l'esposizione, in cinque categorie o suddivisioni simboliche di base, definibili come simbolismi 'montano', 'vegetale', 'edilizio', 'ascensionale' ed 'acquatico'.

Congiuntamente essi costituiscono un insieme omogeneo le cui varie parti sono quasi sempre associate e mescolate l'una all'altra.

Il simbolismo montano si esplica nel tema della montagna cosmica, riscontrabile in Cina nelle tradizioni sui monti del *K'un-lun* e su altri monti più o meno forniti di attributi 'centrali'.

Il simbolismo vegetale può esprimersi sia indipendentemente dal tema della montagna, sia in congiunzione con esso. Il primo caso trova riscontro per esempio nella tradizioni sull'albero *Chien*; il secondo nelle tradizioni sul giardino edenico (*Hsüan-p'u*) posto alla

sommità del *K'un-lun*, in cui crescono l'albero (o l'erba) dell'immortalità e della conoscenza e gli alberi portatori di gemme.

I simbolismi montano e vegetale rappresentano il trasferimento nella sfera esterna del motivo archetipico originario, e segnatamente nei due regni minerale e vegetale, dominî rispettivamente caratterizzati dall'immutabilità e dalla ciclicità autorigenerante.

Il simbolismo edilizio è espresso nei sostituti analogici dell'*axis mundi* (torre, palazzo, tempio, scala, palo centrale dell'abitazione etc.) che possono essere localizzati nel centro primordiale, quasi a suo complemento, o costituire delle ipostasi a sè stanti.¹²

Questi tre simbolismi si svolgono lungo una direttrice verticale¹³ a cui è legato anche il simbolismo definito ascensionale, propriamente 'attivo', in quanto presuppone una partecipazione/integrazione allo spazio sacro da parte dell' 'uomo di conoscenza'. Egli infatti, operando una frattura del piano ontologico e trasportandosi di conseguenza dal tempo profano all'*illud tempus* dei primordî, acquista la possibilità di movimento nei diversi e sovrapposti piani d'esistenza, la cui soglia è privilegiatamente posta nel 'centro'. E' il caso dei rituali sciamanici di ascesa¹⁴ o delle tradizioni taoiste (HNT, IV, 3a) sul monte *Liang-fêng*. A queste quattro categorie simboliche va infine aggiunto il simbolismo delle acque che si esplica nel tema della fonte d'immortalità (*Tan-shui*) o pure, lungo una direttrice orizzontale,¹⁵ nel tema dei fiumi (in numero variabile) che escono dagli angoli del monte, determinando le direzioni cardinali.

1.2.1. I piani di esistenza

Prima di passare all'analisi delle singole categorie simboliche, è opportuno soffermarsi brevemente su ciò che s'intende per 'piani di esistenza'.

In ogni tradizione tali piani, definibili anche 'mondi' o 'gradi' se considerati come trasposizioni esterne ovvero come stati dell'essere, sono sempre tre; questa suddivisione ternaria può tuttavia assumere due diversi aspetti organizzativi:

“...Suivant l'une de ces divisions les trois mondes sont les Enfers, la Terre et les Cieux; suivant l'autre, où les Enfers ne sont plus envisagés, ce sont la Terre, l'Atmosphère (ou region intermédiaire) et le Ciel (...) Enfin pour les Cieux et les Enfers, des subdivisions en nombre variable sont souvent envisagés...”¹⁶

Nel caso specifico delle tradizioni cinesi qui analizzate, vale il secondo caso.

Al di sopra del piano terreno o 'ctonio', abitato dall'uomo, stava un piano che definiremo 'sovrannaturale', cui appartenevano gli *shen* (genî naturali) e sopra a questo stava un piano 'uranico', dimora dell'essere supremo (unitario ed antropomorfo) definito *Ti* o *Shang-ti* sino agli inizi del primo millennio a.C. e *T'ien* ('Cielo') in epoca successiva.¹⁷ Oltre agli *shen*, che tenevano in collegamento i varî piani e si manifestavano sotto le più aberranti fattezze mostruose, esistevano degli altri esseri trascendenti, i *kuei*,¹⁸ incarnazione maligna e terrificata del *p'o* del defunto,¹⁹ quando non propiziato con opportune offerte dai congiunti. Superiore all'uomo era infine l' 'uomo di conoscenza' o 'di potere', che partecipava in vario modo del mistero dei piani transumani ed era in grado di evocare, comandare ed esorcizzare le creature spirituali (o anche di divenire *shen* egli stesso).²⁰ In questa categoria generica possono essere inserite varie figure, dagli stregoni (*shih*) alle sciamane/medium (*wu*) fino agli immortali taoisti (*sheng-jen*, *shen-hsien*, *hsien-jen*).²¹ Per quanto riguarda il piano propriamente 'infero', va detto che la credenza nelle Sorgenti Gialle (*Huang-ch'üan*), se pur diffusa sin dagli inizi del primo millennio a.C.,²² rimase in una posizione a nostro avviso subalterna, mentre restò preponderante, riguardo ai piani di esistenza, lo schema gerarchico ctonio/sovrannaturale/uranico.

1.3. Simbolismo montano

Il simbolismo montano trova espressione, nella Cina antica, principalmente nelle tradizioni sui monti occidentali del *K'un-lun*,²³ con ogni probabilità identificati come *axis mundi* in seguito all'irruzione delle leggende puraniche sul monte *Meru*. La sistematizzazione definitiva del motivo à collocabile tra il III° e il V° secolo dell'era cristiana.²⁴

Prima di questa data esistono dei disaccordi, anche profondi, tra le varie tradizioni e soprattutto tra il MTTC ed i testi successivi, che collimano su di un solo punto: l'esistenza sulla vetta del *K'un-lun* di un giardino favoloso detto Giardino Sospeso;²⁵ questo fatto può far considerare il MTTC come rappresentativo delle credenze più arcaiche ed autenticamente cinesi e può d'altro canto indicare

lo HNT come punto d'inizio di quel mutamento di tendenza verificatosi sulla base degli elementi indiani importati. Passiamo ora ad analizzare le singole fonti.

Lo *Erh-ya* afferma che “*K'un-lun* è il nome che designa le alture a tre ripiani (*san-ch'eng*)”²⁶ e aggiunge che il vanto del nord-ovest sono i monti del *K'un-lun*, su cui crescono gli alberi *ch'iu-lin* e *lang-kan*.²⁷ Il MTTC dedica ampio spazio all'argomento (II, 9a-14b; III, 15a-b).

Il Figlio-del-Cielo si aggira per diversi giorni nella regione del *K'un-lun*, che appare come un vasto altopiano punteggiato di varie vette principali e circondato da catene minori di monti.

Nella regione si trovano il monte Primavera (*Ch'un-shan*, II, 10b), il Giardino Sospeso (II, 11a) e una sua ipostasi, le terre del clan Chên Han (II, 13b) e lo Stagno di Smeraldo (*yao-ch'ih*, III, 5a-b), in riva al quale si svolge il banchetto con *Hsi-wang-mu*.²⁸ Dall'altopiano sgorgano il Fiume Rosso (*ch'ih-shui*) e il Fiume Nero (*hêh-shui*).

Riguardo al monte Primavera, la vetta principale, il testo riporta:

“...Si narra che quello sia il monte più alto del *t'ien-hsia* (...) Si narra anche che sul monte Primavera vi fosse uno stagno formato da una fonte limpida e calda, mai turbata dal vento: gli uccelli del cielo e i cento quadrupedi vi si riuniscono per dissetarsi. In questo luogo che gli antichi chiamavano *Hsüan-p'u*, il Figlio-del-Cielo ottenne le migliori giade *yü-ts'e* e *chih-ssu* (...) Vi era qui una fiera che poteva mangiare tigri e leopardi. Il suo aspetto è di alce, ma più snello (...) o di un piccolo cervo con la testa minuscola ed il grande naso. Vi erano inoltre leopardi rossi e tigri bianche, orsi bruni e grigi, sciacalli e cavalli bradi, bufali, capre e cinghiali selvatici, uccelli bianchi e falchi neri in grado di ghermire una capra e di divorare cervi e cinghiali (...) Si narra che quel monte sia il più ricco del *t'ien-hsia*, una miniera di pietre preziose e rare giade, e che le messi vi crescano splendide e gli alberi alti e la vegetazione lussureggiante...”

Lo HNT marca un netto mutamento di tendenza (IV, 2a-b), con l'aumento e l'organizzazione degli elementi fantastici e/o simbolici.

Fa la sua comparsa la dimora terrena del Sovrano Celeste e l'idrografia è più curata; vengono nominati i fiumi *Ho*, *Ch'ih*, *Yang* e *Jo*. In mezzo a quest'ultimo stanno delle isole che sono abitate dal popolo *Lo/Yüeh* ('della Gioia' o 'della Musica').²⁹ *Hsi-wang-mu*, che non ha connotazioni di sesso, è posta alle pendici del monte accanto ad uno dei luoghi classici della mitologia cinese, *Liu-sha* o 'Sabbieche-scorrono',³⁰ inteso a volte come deserto a volte come fiume:

“... (Yü) livellò i monti *K'un-lun* per abbassarne la cima; in mezzo ad essi sta una città con le mura a nove strati, la sua altezza è di 11.000 *li*, 114 passi, 2 *ch'ih* e 6 *ts'un*. Sopra vi è un cereale arborescente. La sua altezza è di 5 *hsin*. Gli alberi *Chu*, *Yü*, *Hsüan* e *Pu-ssu* ('dell'immortalità') stanno a ovest. Gli alberi *Sha-t'ang* e *Lang-kan* stanno a est. L'albero rosso (*ch'iang*) è a sud e gli alberi *Pi* e *Yao* sono a nord (del *K'un-lun*). Accanto vi sono 440 porte. L'apertura di ognuna è di 4 *li*. A fianco vi sono 9 pozzi. All'angolo nordovest risplendono le gemme. La porta nord si apre per far entrare il vento *Pu-chou* nel palazzo vasto 1 *ch'ing* e nella stanza girevole (*hsüan-shih*).³¹ Il Giardino Sospeso e i monti *Liang-feng* e *Fan-t'ung* sono all'interno della Porta Celeste (*Ch'ang-ho*). Sono questi i suoi (di *Ch'ang-ho*) giardini e il laghetto che vi si trova ha le acque gialle. Queste acque gialle fanno tre giri e tornano alla sorgente. Essa è detta *Tan-shui*: Bevendone l'acqua non si muore....”³²

Nello SHC vi sono tre distinte descrizioni del *K'un-lun*: tra le montagne centrooccidentali (II, 17b-18b), all'interno del mare occidentale (XI, 2b-5a) e in mezzo al Gran Deserto occidentale (XVI, 5b-6b). Come si nota, i monti vanno progressivamente spostandosi ad occidente,³³ seguendo con ogni probabilità il corso delle successive stratificazioni testuali. La sezione II contiene questa descrizione:

“...A sud-ovest, alla distanza di 400 *li*, si trovano le alture del *K'un-lun*. E' là che si trova la residenza terrena del Sovrano Celeste (*Ti chih hsia-tu*). Il genio *Lu-wu* è incaricato della sua guardia. Ha corpo di tigre e nove code; ha volto umano e artigli di tigre. E' uno *shen*. Dirige e sorveglia le nove parti del cielo e il corso delle stagioni nei giardini del Sovrano Celeste. Vi sono degli esseri dall'aspetto di montoni, ma con quattro corna. Sono detti *T'u-lu* e sono antropofagi. Vi è anche un uccello che ha l'aspetto di una mosca ed è grande come un'anatra mandarina. Si chiama *Chin-yüan* e quando punge un altro essere vivente lo fa morire; se punge un albero lo fa seccare. Vi è poi un uccello detto *Ch'un* ('quaglia') che fa la guardia agli oggetti del Sovrano Celeste. Vi è poi un albero simile al sorbo, che ha fiori gialli e frutti rossi dal gusto di prugna ma senza nocciuolo. Si chiama *Sha-t'ang*. Non affonda nell'acqua e mangiandone i frutti non si annega. (...) Vi sono poi molti animali ed uccelli bizzarri...”

La descrizione successiva inserita nella sezione XI, e molto affine allo HNT, può a ragione essere considerata come il modello più perfezionato di *espace sacré* reperibile nella letteratura cinese antica; nulla di ciò che vi si trova può in qualche modo essere definito come non-trascendentale o superfluo e l'idrografia³⁴ e la più completa tra quelle note:

“...La residenza terrena del Sovrano Celeste (*Ti chih hsia-tu*) è sull'altopiano del *K'un-lun* all'interno del mare, a nord-ovest. L'altopiano è vasto 800 *li* quadrati e alto 10.000 *jen*.³⁵ Sopra vi è un cereale arborescente (*mu-he*) alto 5 *hsin* e con circonferenza di 5 *wei*. Di fronte vi sono 9 pozzi con balausta di giada. Di fronte vi sono 9 porte tra cui la porta di *K'ai-ming*.³⁶ Un animale la sorveglia e

i 100 *shen* vi abitano. Vi è il precipizio di *Pa-yü*, al bordo del Fiume Rosso.” Se non si è (virtuosi) come (l’arciere) *I*,³⁷ non si può risalirne i versanti. *K’ai-ming* ha il corpo di una grande tigre e nove teste tutte con volto umano; ha lo sguardo volto ad oriente e sta sul *K’un-lun*. A ovest di *K’ai-ming* vi sono gli uccelli *Fêng*, *Huang* e *Luan*; tutti hanno sul capo un serpente, un serpente sotto le zampe e uno rosso sul petto.³⁸ A nord vi è *Shih-jou*³⁹; gli alberi *chu*, *wen-yü*, *yü-ch’i* e l’albero dell’Immortalità (*pu-ssu shu*) sono pure a nord. Vi sono poi una coppia di alberi vermigli (*chu mu*), cereali, cipressi, dolci sorgenti e l’albero della Conoscenza (*Sheng-mu*).⁴⁰ (...) A sud di *K’ai-ming* vi è un albero.⁴¹ Vi sono poi un uccello a sei teste, draghi (*chiao*),⁴² cobra, scimmie *wei*, leopardi, filari d’alberi in riva a laghetti, uccelli canterini e falchi e *shih-jou*.”

Nella sezione XVI si effettuano dei mutamenti, primo fra tutti la comparsa di *Hsi-wang-mu* che, assieme ad un essere dal corpo di tigre, è la guardiana del luogo:

“...A sud del mare occidentale, al bordo delle Sabbie-che-scrono, tra il Fiume Rosso e il Fiume Nero (uno davanti e uno dietro) vi è un gran monte detto *K’un-lun*. Vi è uno *shen* con volto umano e corpo di tigre bianco maculato e coda bianca. Più in basso vi sono gli abissi del fiume *Jo* che lo circondano. Vi è anche il monte del Fuoco (*Yen-huo*); gli oggetti gettativi dentro prendono subito fuoco. Vi è un essere con un copricapo *sheng*,⁴³ denti di tigre e coda di leopardo. Abita in una grotta e il suo nome è *Hsi-wang-mu*. Su questo monte sono riunite tutte le specie animali...”

Quest’ultima descrizione si presenta più breve e in parziale disaccordo con le altre, ma non va tralasciato che essa venne aggiunta in appendice da Kuo P’u, nel IV° secolo d.C. Il passaggio può quindi essere considerato come una integrazione *a posteriori*, motivata dall’esigenza di ricollocare *Hsi-wang-mu* nel luogo che le era abituale in altre tradizioni.

1.3.1. Simbolismi analoghi e/o complementari al *K’un-lun*

Complementari al tema principale sono le tradizioni su alcuni monti sacri che contribuiscono a fissare la posizione esatta del monte centrale.⁴⁴ Si tratta di due serie di montagne, che possono essere definite come ‘monti dell’alba’ e ‘monti del tramonto’ (descritte rispettivamente nelle sezioni XIV e XVI dello SHC), da cui escono ed in cui entrano il sole e la luna.⁴⁵

Di particolare interesse è, nella prima sequenza, il monte *I-t’ien su-men* (‘della Porta della Rinascita addossata al Cielo’) (XIV, 5b), sede ideale quindi per la rinascita individuale e la comunicazione tra i mondi. Nella seconda sequenza va invece sottolineato il monte *Ta-huang* (‘del Gran Deserto’) (XVI, 7b), posto nel Gran Deserto occidentale: “Su di esso vanno a posarsi il sole e la luna. Vi è un

essere con tre facce ed un solo braccio (il destro). E' figlio di Chuan Hsü. Quest'essere con tre facce non muore."⁴⁶

Analogo al *K'un-lun* è il monte *Jih-yüeh* ('del Sole e della Luna') (XVI, 4b), posto nel Gran Deserto occidentale ed esplicitamente definito come 'asse del cielo' (*T'ien-shu*). Su di esso si trova la porta della Dama *Wu*, in cui entrano il sole e la luna. E' guardato da un essere con volto umano, senza braccia e con i piedi attaccati al contrario sulla testa; il suo nome è *Hsü*.

Sempre nello SHC (XI, 2a) si parla di un monte posto al centro del feudo di *Fêng* (*Liu-huang*), a ovest della tomba di *Hou-chi*. Dagli angoli di questo monte si diramano quattro strade orientate ai punti cardinali.

Esiste infine una controparte infera del monte del centro, cioè il monte *Yu-tu* ('della Capitale delle Tenebre'), posto nel mare settentrionale (SHC, XVIII, 6b). Da esso esce il Fiume Nero (*Héh-shui*), è popolato da una miriade di animali (tutti neri) e sta al centro di una vasta regione (*Ta-yu chich kuo*) abitata da uomini neri che vivono nudi nelle caverne.

1.3.2. Simbolismo edilizio

Come sopraaccennato il simbolismo che abbiamo definito edilizio può manifestarsi sotto due forme: o come complemento simbolico costitutivo del 'centro' primordiale, o come sua riproposizione ipostatizzata e schema macrocosmico. Nel primo caso esso è rappresentato dalla 'dimora terrena del Sovrano Celeste', descritta in HNT e SHC e, *mutatis mutandis*, palesemente ricalcata sul modello puranico della città di Brahma e degli otto *Lokapâla*,⁴⁷ che è circondata dalle acque del Gange allo stesso modo in cui 'gli abissi del fiume *Jo*', circondano il *K'un-lun* (SHC, XVI, 6a).

Il secondo caso trova riscontro in Cina nel ben noto edificio del *Ming-t'ang*, edificato sulla base dell'equazione cosmologica quadrato/circolo = terra/cielo, e una delle cui parti fu denominata da Han Wu-ti proprio col nome di *K'un-lun*.⁴⁸

1.4. Simbolismo vegetale. Gli alberi Chien e Luan

Parallelamente od in congiunzione al tema della montagna sacra è universalmente diffuso il motivo dell'albero cosmico, che è reperibile anche nella letteratura cinese a partire dall'epoca *Chan-kuo*.⁴⁹

Prototipo cinese dell'albero del centro è il così detto *Chien-mu*; la più antica descrizione di quest'albero è in HNT, IV, 3a:

“...l'albero *Chien* si trova sul monte *Tu-huang*. Tutti i *Ti* ('sovrani'/'divinità') salgono e scendono da esso. (in quel luogo) a mezzo dì (*jih-chung*) non v'è ombra alcuna e se si grida non si ode eco.⁵⁰ (Esso) è il centro (*chung*) del cielo e della terra...”

Il testo, com'è evidente, si commenta da sè e viene ampliato ed integrato da due passi dello SHC. Nella sezione X (4a) viene descritto come avente le foglie simili al castagno, frutti simili alla *saponaria* e il legno della consistenza di una canna. E' localizzato in una terra all'interno del mare meridionale, accanto al fiume *Jo* e a ovest del guardiano *Ya-yü*. Nella sezione XVIII (3b-4a), attribuita a Kuo P'u, compare la sua descrizione più particolareggiata:

“...(al di là del mare meridionale) vi è un albero con foglie turchine, tronco porporino, frutti scuri e fiori gialli. E' chiamato *Chien-mu*. E' alto 100 *jen* (800 piedi) ed è privo di rami veri e propri; ha nove diramazioni simili a manici d'ascia e sotto di esso stanno nove *kou* (*Lysium chinense?*).⁵¹ Ha frutti come la canapa e foglie a punta. *T'ai-hao* (*Fu-hsi*) vi sostò vicino e *Huang-ti* se ne prese cura. (Accanto) vi è *Ya-yü*,⁵² che ha il corpo di drago e che si nutre di uomini...”

Le connotazioni assiali sono presenti in questi passi quasi al completo: l'albero *Chien* è il 'centro del cielo e della terra' e, per questa sua peculiarità, non dà a mezzodì alcuna ombra (come lo gnomone); è altissimo e simile ad un pilastro; ha un guardiano teratomorfo ed antropofago che lo sorveglia; è usato per spostarsi tra i piani di esistenza e possiede nove finti rami che sono una metafora dei cieli superiori. Va infine notato, per inciso, che la sua posizione va spostandosi verso meridione come quella dei monti *K'un-lun* va spostandosi verso occidente.

A precisare la sua posizione centrale contribuiscono le tradizioni sui due alberi *Fu* e *Jo*,⁵³ posti all'estremo oriente ed all'estremo occidente della terra e che, analogamente ai 'monti dell'alba' e 'del tramonto', fungono da punto di partenza e di arrivo del sole.

Un albero similmente fornito di attributi centrali à descritto in SHC, XV, 4a:

“...(nel deserto meridionale) si eleva il monte *Yün-yü* ('delle Nubi e della Pioggia'). Vi è qui un albero detto *Luan* e vi è una roccia rossa sopra a cui quest'albero cresce.⁵⁴ Ha radici gialle, rami rossi, foglie turchine e tutti i *Ti* vi raccolgono le erbe magiche...”⁵⁵

Tale tradizione integra la simbologia delineata nei passi precedenti, ponendo l'albero sulla vetta di un monte.⁵⁶

1.4.1. *Il Giardino Sospeso e sue ipostasi.*⁵⁷

Sulla cima del monte cosmico si trova un giardino edenico, spazio simbolico organizzato e (secondo una terminologia profana) atemporale; esso è lo spazio rigenerativo (vegetale) reintegrandosi al quale si acquista l'effettivo potere di movimento ascensionale e di penetrazione nei mondi superiori. La 'reintegrazione edenica' come tappa di un processo iniziatico è chiaramente espressa in HNT, IV, 3a (cf. il paragrafo successivo).

In questo giardino, guardato da un genio d'aspetto terrifico, crescono varie specie vegetali miracolose, quali l'albero della Conoscenza (*Sheng-mu*), l'albero/erba dell'Immortalità (*Pu-ssu shu/yo*),⁵⁸ alberi che producono gemme (*lang-kan*, *pi*, *yao*, *wen-yü*, *yü-chi*),⁵⁹ e trovano altresì dimora le più svariate specie animali, con alla testa le fenici *Fêng* e *Huang* (maschio e femmina) e l'uccello *Luan*.

Questo giardino di delizie, immagine simbolica della sempre agognata *aurea aetas*, si trova sovente ipostatizzata nelle leggende relative a varî 'paesi di cuccagna' sparsi qua e là, spazi privilegiati i cui abitanti vivono una vita felice, agiata e facile, in perfetta armonia con ciò che li circonda.⁶⁰

E' il caso, fra gli altri, del paese del clan *Chên-Han* (MTTC, II, 13b), della landa di *Chu-yao* (SHC, VII, 4a) e del Paese della Fertilità (*Yao chih kuo*) descritto in SHC, XVI, 3a-b. Una probabile fonte di ispirazione di queste tradizioni può essere indicata nelle leggende contenute nel *Râmâyana* (IV, 43) e nel *Mahâbhârata* (VI, 7) sulla terra beata di *Uttarakuru*.⁶¹

Il Paese della Fertilità viene così descritto:

"...Il suo popolo abita in fertili distese e le uova di fenice sono il suo cibo e la dolce rugiada la sua bevanda. Tutto ciò che essi desiderano, possono assaggiarlo ed ottenerlo. Vi sono poi fiori dolci e dolci *kan* ('mandarini') e salici bianchi. Vi sono *shih-jou* e le tre specie di cavalli pomellati, la preziosa giada *hsüan*, il diaspro *kuei*, la gemma *yao* e la giada *pi*, l'albero bianco, il corniolo *lang-kan*, cinabro bianco e verdeazzurro, argento e ferro. *Luan* e *Fêng* spontaneamente cantano e l'uccello *Fêng* danza. Vi sono i cento quadrupedi che vi abitano. Si narra che vi siano tre uccelli turchini⁶² con la testa rossa e gli occhi neri. Uno si chiama grande *Li* ('rigògolo'), uno piccolo *Li* (*idem*), uno *ch'ing-niao*..."⁶³

1.5. Simbolismo ascensionale

Il simbolismo ascensionale esprime, come già affermato, l'aspetto propriamente 'attivo' del simbolismo del centro, la possibilità cioè di mutamento del piano di esistenza.

Reintegrarsi al centro equivale ad acquisire il potere di movimento dal piano ctonio a quello uranico, come nel caso dei ben noti rituali sciamanici del volo magico e di ascesa dell'albero, del pilastro, della scala, dell'arcobaleno.⁶⁴

Il mito principale in questo senso è collegato in Cina alla montagna cosmica del *K'un-lun*, in particolare alla tradizione sul picco di *Liang-fêng* ('della Fresca Brezza') (HNT, IV, 3a):

“...Le alture del *K'un-lun* sono doppiate in altezza dal picco di *Liang-fêng*. Salendovi non si muore. Al di sopra sta il Giardino Sospeso; salendovi si acquistano poteri magici e si comanda alla pioggia e al vento. Sopra sta il Cielo Superiore (*Shang-t'ien*); salendovi si diventa *shen*. (Quest'ultimo) è chiamato la dimora del Sovrano Celeste (*T'ai-ti*)...”

Sempre nello HNT si legge anche che “aprendo la porta *Ch'ang-ho* si penetra la Porta del Cielo (*T'ien-men*)” (I, 4a) e che “il Giardino Sospeso e i monti *Liang-fêng* e *Fan-t'ung* sono all'interno della porta *Ch'ang-ho*.” (IV, 2b).⁶⁵

Le tappe dell'ascesi sono così definite compiutamente: salendo sul *K'un-lun* e penetrando la Porta Celeste si acquista l'immortalità (probabilmente bevendo alla fonte detta *Tan-shui*)⁶⁶ e ci si integra allo stato edenico simboleggiato dal Giardino Sospeso, da cui si accede al Cielo Supremo, alla dimora di *T'ai-ti*, mutando natura e divenendo *shen*.⁶⁷

1.5.1. Spazio sacro e guardiano. Il problema di *Hsi-wang-mu*

La via che conduce al centro, spazio sacro per eccellenza, è sempre ardua e l'accesso all'*espace sacré* è sbarrato da un guardiano, teratomorfo ed in particolare anguiforme, il cui superamento costituisce l'ultima prova iniziatica prima di poter penetrare nelle dimensioni sovranaturali.⁶⁸

Anche questo tema è universale, basti pensare all'*epos* di *Gilgamesh* o al mito di Eracle nell'orto delle Esperidi, e ha varî riscontri nelle fonti qui analizzate. Accanto all'albero *Chien* sta l'essere detto *Ya-yü*, che lo SHC (X, 3b) pone a ovest dell'albero, in riva al fiume *Jo*. Questo guardiano ha testa di drago ed è antropofago.⁶⁹

Similmente il monte *Jih-yüeh* (SHC, XVI, 4b) è guardato dal genio *Hsü*, e il monte *Ta-huang* è guardato da un genio immortale con tre facce ed un braccio solo (SHC, XVI, 7b). A guardia della dimora terrena del Sovrano Celeste sta *Lu-wu* (SHC, II, 17b) che ha volto umano, corpo ed artigli di tigre e nove code o, alternativamente, sta *K'ai-ming* (SHC, XI, 4a) che ha pure corpo di tigre ma invece di nove code possiede nove teste con volto umano.⁷⁰ Nel *Li-sao* (30b) l'autore parla infine di un non specificato guardiano che gli nega l'accesso alla porta *Ch'ang-ho*. Sembra opportuno, e doveroso, includere in questo paragrafo delle note su *Hsi-wang-mu*, il personaggio forse più complesso e controverso dell'intera mitologia cinese.

Una miriade di commentatori ha cercato in varie epoche di sciogliere questo nodo gordiano, proponendo una ridda di ipotesi più o meno serie⁷¹ e giungendo a conclusioni spesso in totale disaccordo. Rimandiamo per uno studio storico/evolutivo completo e scientificamente corretto sul personaggio (che andrebbe altrimenti ben al di là dello spazio concedibile in questa sede) al pregevole lavoro di M. Loewe,⁷² limitandoci qui a considerare solo la posizione del personaggio nelle fonti analizzate.

Il MTTC (III, 15a-b) pone *Hsi-wang-mu* sul *K'un-lun* senza specificare nulla sul suo aspetto fisico e sul suo sesso.⁷³ Lo HNT (IV, 8b) la pone vicino al *K'un-lun*, al bordo di *Liu-sha*. Lo SHC la colloca dapprima (II, 19a-b) sul monte 'della Giada' (*Yü-shan*): "...il suo aspetto è umano con coda di leopardo e denti di tigre, è abile a fischiare e porta sui capelli scarmigliati il copricapo detto *sheng*."⁷⁴ In seguito la colloca (XII, 1a) a nord del *K'un-lun*, sul monte 'della Sciamana dei Serpenti' (*Shih-wu chih shan*): essa porta lo *sheng*, ha i piedi poggiati su di uno sgabello e tre uccelli verdi raccolgono il cibo per lei. Nella sezione XVI, 5b, *Hsi-wang-mu* torna infine sul *K'un-lun*:⁷⁵ porta lo *sheng*, ha coda di leopardo e denti di tigre e vive in una grotta.

Per concludere, sempre nello SHC (XVI, 3a) si parla di un monte detto *Hsi-wang-mu-shan* e non specificato. Questo è tutto. Volendo trarre una conclusione, si può dire che, dalla prima menzione nel MTTC che la poneva sul *K'un-lun*, dopo un temporaneo 'esilio', *Hsi-wang-mu* tornò nella sua sede ideale sul monte cosmico in un'epoca relativamente tarda e là rimase nei periodi successivi. Il passaggio dello SHC, XVI, 5b consente infine di considerarla come

genio tutelare e guardiana del K'un-lun. Azzardare altre ipotesi appare rischioso e non è del resto compito di questa nota.

1.6. *Simbolismi acquatici*

L'aspetto acquatico del simbolismo assiale trova riscontro in due tradizioni: quella sui fiumi che sgorgano dai fianchi del monte cosmico (determinando sul piano orizzontale le direzioni cardinali) e quella sulla fonte dell'immortalità, complementare al simbolismo vegetale rigenerativo dell'albero/erba dell'immortalità/conoscenza.

Il numero dei fiumi è, come la loro denominazione, estremamente variabile.

Sono sempre presenti il fiume Ho, il Fiume Rosso (*Ch'ih-shui*) e il Fiume Nero (*Héh-shui*); ad essi vanno via via ad aggiungersi i fiumi detti *Jo*,⁷⁶ *Yang*, *Hsiang*, *Ch'ing*, *Po* e *Liu-sha*, che come abbiamo notato varia talvolta da fiume a deserto.

Nel MTTC non esiste alcuna idrografia simbolica organizzata e i fiumi Rosso e Nero vengono collocati nella regione del K'un-lun senza specificazioni di sorta sulla loro sorgente ed il loro corso.

Nello HNT compare una certa organizzazione idrografica e da tre dei quattro angoli escono dei fiumi (IV, 2b-3a):

“...Il fiume *Ho* esce dall'angolo nord-est, scorre poi nel vasto mare ed entra tra i monti di pietre ammassati da Yü per guidare (il fiume) (*Yü suo tao chishih-shan*).⁷⁷ Il Fiume Rosso (*Ch'ih-shui*) esce dall'angolo sud-est e a sud-ovest entra nel mare meridionale, a est della palude *Tan*. A est del Fiume Rosso vi è poi il fiume *Jo* che esce dalle rupi di *Chiung* e giunge sino a *Ho-li*. Un affluente entra nel *Liu-sha* e sbocca nel mare meridionale. Il fiume *Yang* esce dall'angolo nord-ovest ed entra nel mare meridionale a sud del Popolo Alato (*Yü-min*). Questi quattro fiumi sono la culla dei Geni Celesti (*Ti chih shen*); vi crescono le cento erbe magiche e vi prosperano i diecimila esseri⁷⁸...”

Nello SHC esistono tre idrografie correlate al K'un-lun. La prima è nella sezione II, 18a-b:

“...Il fiume *Ho* sgorga da questi (monti); va verso est fino al monte *Wu-ta*, dopo aver girato a sud. Anche il Fiume Rosso sgorga da questi (monti) e scorrendo verso sud-est va a gettarsi nel fiume *Chi-t'ien*. Da questi (monti) sgorga anche il fiume *Yang* che scorre a sud-ovest sino al fiume *Ch'ou-t'u*. Il Fiume Nero (*Héh-shui*), che pure sgorga da qui, scorre a occidente fino (al monte) *Ta-kan*. Vi sono molti animali e uccelli bizzarri...⁷⁹”

Nella sezione XI, il numero dei fiumi sale da quattro a sei, dei quali due escono dagli angoli orientali e quattro (due per angolo) dal lato occidentale:

“...Il Fiume Rosso sgorga dall’angolo sud-est e scorre a nord ovest; (a sud-ovest si getta nel mare meridionale a est di *Yen-huo*).⁸⁰ Il fiume *Ho* esce dall’angolo nord-est e scorre a nord e a sud-ovest entra nel vasto mare per poi addentrarsi tra i monti di pietre ammassate da *Yü* per guidare (il fiume). Il fiume *Hsiang* ed il Fiume Nero sgorgano dall’angolo nord-ovest e vanno a est e verso nord est; a sud entrano nel mar meridionale a est del Popolo Alato. I fiumi *Jo* e *Ch’ing* (‘verde’) sgorgano dall’angolo sud-ovest e scorrono a est, poi a nord, poi verso ovest...”

Nella sezione XVI, 5b-6a l’idrografia muta infine in questi termini:

“...A sud del mare occidentale, al margine di *Liu-sha*, dietro al Fiume Rosso e davanti al Fiume Nero vi è un grande monte chiamato *K’un-lun* (...) più in basso vi sono gli abissi del fiume *Jo* che lo circondano...”

Come si nota il numero dei fiumi è ancora sceso a tre, ma i monti sono circondati dalle acque come nella già citata tradizione puranica sul palazzo di Brahma. Nel *Li-sao*, vengono infine nominati il Fiume Bianco (*Po-shui*, 31a) e il Fiume Rosso (46b), anche qui senza alcuna indicazione sulla loro fonte e sul loro corso.⁸¹

Per quanto riguarda la fonte d’immortalità, essa viene menzionata solo nello HNT (IV, 2b):

“...Il laghetto che è in questi giardini (della porta *Ch’ang-ho*) ha le acque gialle. Queste acque gialle fanno tre giri e tornano alla sorgente. Questa è detta *T’an-shui* (‘Acque di Cinabro’) e bevendone l’acqua non si muore (*i.e.* si diviene immortali)...”⁸²

1.7. Riscontri iconografici

Parallelamente alle fonti letterarie, il complesso simbolico dell’albero/monte cosmico è presente anche a livello iconografico, soprattutto in alcuni dei numerosissimi bassorilievi tombali Han.

In alcuni esemplari dello Shantung⁸³ spicca un albero gigantesco dai rami intrecciati, sovrastato da numerosi esseri sovranaturali; un altro albero mitico, il *Mu-lien-li*, risultante dalla fusione di due tronchi allacciati, è pure visibile sui bassorilievi e, se pur non riscontrato nei testi analizzati, è stato identificato da alcuni autori come variante dell’albero del centro.⁸⁴

I monti del *K’un-lun* non hanno invece alcun riscontro iconografico palese, se non forse nel trono tricuspide su cui sta assisa *Hsi-wang-mu*⁸⁵ e che può essere, restando nel campo delle ipotesi, la stilizzazione di una cresta montana. Un ultimo accenno va infine fatto agli specchi d’epoca Han del tipo detto ‘a TLV’, che i commentato-

ri definiscono unanimemente come schema simbolico e rimpicciolito del macrocosmo (destinato a mantenere il possessore in corretto rapporto col mondo circostante). L'umbone che sporge dal quadrato centrale verrebbe così ad essere un'immagine dell'*axis mundi* (quindi del *K'un-lun*), posto al centro della terra quadrata, a sua volta inscritta nel cielo circolare.⁸⁶

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* I testi cinesi sono stati indicati con le seguenti abbreviazioni: MTTC / *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*, HNT / *Huai-nan-tzu*, SHC / *Shan-hai ching*. La numerazione delle pagine segue l'edizione *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*, Shanghai, Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1922, per tutte le opere eccetto che per lo SHC, di cui si è seguita l'edizione *Ssu-pu pei-yao*, *Shan-hai ching chien-lu*, Taipei, 1962 (con commento di Kuo P'u e Ho I-hsing).

¹ Per una loro definizione cf. *infra* (1.2.1.).

² I termini 'archetipo/-tipico' sono qui usati in senso 'prejunghiano', come chiaramente precisato da M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour* (tr. it. *Il mito dell'eterno ritorno*, Bologna, Borla, 1975², pp. 6-7).

³ Primo fra tutti Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, cit., pp. 19-38; *Traité d'histoire des religions* (tr. it. *Trattato di storia delle religioni*, Torino, Boringhieri, 1976, pp. 239-242, 272-311, 382-398); *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (tr. it. *Lo sciamanismo e le tecniche arcaiche dell'estasi*, Roma, Mediterranee, 1974, pp. 283-303); "Centre du monde, temple, maison," in *Le symbolisme cosmique des monuments religieux*, Roma, Is. M.E.O., 1957, ('Serie Or. XIV), pp. 57-82. Tra i lavori più recenti va segnalato l'ottimo (anche se talvolta discutibile) lavoro di V. N. Toporov, "L'albero universale. Saggio d'interpretazione semiotica," in Lotman-Uspenskij (eds.), *Ricerche Semiotiche*, Torino, Einaudi, 1973, pp. 148-201.

⁴ Ci riferiamo in particolare ai lavori di M. Granet che, se pur ammirevoli per mole, vastità di repiro e per il loro essere autenticamente pionieristici, peccano tuttavia troppo sovente di approssimazione, astoricità ed avventatezza per poter essere accettati con fiducia. Cf. in proposito la netta stroncatura di B. Karlgren ("Legends and Cults in Ancient China," *BMFEA*, XVIII (1946), p. 347) che definisce l'opera di Granet come "worse than a caricature" e "a weird and fanciful farrago of abstruse symbolism and semi-philosophical magic that is entirely foreign to pre-Han China." Il chiarimento ci sembra fondamentale, visto l'uso massiccio dell'opera di Granet fatto finora dagli storici delle religioni.

⁵ Cf. H. Maspero, *La Chine antique*, Parigi, Impr. Nat., 1955, p. 482; H. H. Dubs, "An ancient Chinese mystery cult," *Harvard Theological Review*, XXXV (1942), p. 229, nota 18, propone la data del 299 a.C.; cf. anche M. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, Londra, Allen & Unwin, 1979, p. 149, nota 29.

⁶ Tali influenze sono state ampiamente analizzate nel vecchio ma non superato articolo di A. Conrady, "Indischer Einfluss in China im IV. Jahrhundert v. Chr.," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, LX (1907), pp. 335-351; cf. inoltre Maspero, *op. cit.*, pp. 504-515 e E. Erkes, *Das Weltbild des Huai-nan-tze*,

Berlino, Oesterheld & Co. Verlag, 1917. Le tradizioni puraniche, se pur fissate per iscritto intorno al IV° secolo d.C., erano già diffuse oralmente fin dal VI°/V° sec. a.C.; cf. R. F. Gombrich, "Antica cosmologia indiana," in Blacker-Loewe (eds.), *Ancient cosmologies* (tr. it. *Antiche Cosmologie*, Roma, Astrolabio-Ubaldini, 1978, pp. 91-109).

⁷ Cf. Karlgren, *op. cit.*, p. 204; Loewe, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Il testo di HNT, VI è stato tradotto da Erkes, *op. cit.* A far da filtro tra le tradizioni indiane e HNT fu molto probabilmente la scuola *yin-yang* di Tsou Yen; sull'opera di Tsou Yen, purtroppo perduta, cf. J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge (U.K.), vol. II (1956), pp. 232-246.

⁸ Non è il caso di affrontare qui il complesso problema dello SHC; cf. come riferimento generale O. Mänchen-Helfen, "The Later Books of the Shan-hai-ching," in *Asia Major*, 1924, pp. 550-586; Loewe, *op. cit.*, p. 148, note 11-12.

⁹ Sul *Ch'u-tz'u* cf. D. Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u. The Songs of the South. An ancient Chinese Anthology*, Oxford Un. Press, 1959.

¹⁰ Cf. Loewe, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹ Va puntualizzato che l'accostamento *K'un-lun/axis mundi* è palese solo in HNT e SHC, opere cioè influenzate ad un livello più o meno profondo dal taoismo. E fu proprio il taoismo infatti a far suo il tema dei monti occidentali come centro del mondo e soprattutto come 'paradiso' (parallelo alle Isole Beate d'oriente), in risposta e come complemento alle teorie cosmologiche diffuse in epoca Han da Tung Chung-shu, che pur riuscendo a spiegare i processi evolutivi/organizzativi derivati dall'avvicinarsi di *yin* e *yang* e dalla sequenza dei *wu-hsing*, lasciava inesplorati e senza risposte la zona del grande mistero, i problemi metafisici, la questione del *postmortem*. Cf. Loewe, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹² Sulla possibilità/inevitabilità di una moltiplicazione degli archetipi cf. Eliade, *Traité...*, cit., pp. 397-398.

¹³ Sull'aspetto 'verticale' cf. Toporov, *cit.*, pp. 169 sgg.

¹⁴ Cf. Eliade, *Le chamanisme...*, cit., pp. 149-168.

¹⁵ Cf. Toporov, *cit.*, pp. 175 sgg.

¹⁶ R. Guénon, *L'ésotérisme de Dante*, Parigi, Les Ed. Traditionnelles, 1939, p. 57. Sui piani di esistenza cf. anche Eliade, *Le chamanisme...*, cit., pp. 283-285 e 298-303.

¹⁷ Cf. Loewe, "Man and Beast. The Hybrid in Early Chinese Art and Literature," *Numen*, XXV/2 (1978), pp. 98-99. Su *Ti* e *T'ien* cf. J. Shih, "The Notions of God in the Ancient Chinese Religion," *Numen*, XVI/2 (1969), pp. 107-121; R. Pettazzoni, *L'onniscienza di Dio*, Torino, Einaudi, 1955, pp. 400-419; L. Lanciotti, "Religioni della Cina," in *Civiltà dell'Oriente*, Firenze, Casini, vol. III (1959), pp. 943-944; B. Schindler, "Development of the Chinese Conception of Supreme Being," *Asia Major*, 'Hirth Ann. Vol.', 1923/I. Shih (pp. 121 sgg.) aggiunge poi un terzo stadio evolutivo, corrispondente alla divinizzazione, in periodo Ch'in e Han, del Principio Unico/*T'ai-i*, origine della serie quinary degli elementi. Se ciò è vero è però altrettanto vero che gli appellativi dell'essere supremo non vennero mai codificati troppo rigidamente, e a riprova di ciò valga il fatto che SHC e HNT lo chiamano indifferentemente *Ti* o *T'ai-ti* o *Shang-ti*.

¹⁸ Su *shen* e *kuei* cf. J. J. M. de Groot, *The religious System of China*, vol. IV, pp. 5-9 (repr. Taipei, 1964).

¹⁹ La forma fisica di un uomo (*hsing*) era scindibile, com'è noto, in una parte *yin* detta *p'o* e in una parte *yang* detta *hun*. Alla morte dell'individuo, il *p'o* andava a popolare le Sorgenti Gialle e il *hun* si avviava a raggiungere la dimora di *Shang-ti*.

Questo in via generale; sui varî aspetti del problema cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise, cit.*, pp. 9-13; Needhem, *op. cit.*, vol. V/2 (1974), pp. 85ff.

²⁰ Cf. HNT, IV, 3a.

²¹ Sulle varie denominazioni degli immortali cf. M. Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien-tchouan. Biographies légendaires des Immortels taoistes de l'antiquité*, Pechino, 1953, p. 10. Sullo sciamanesimo cf. fra gli eltri Eliade, *Le chamanisme...*, *cit.*, pp. 475-488; Needhem, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 132ff.; de Groot, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, pp. 1187ff. Lanciotti, *op. cit.*, pp. 950-951. Mentre la sciamana raggiungeva con la danza degli stati definibili di 'possessione' e di natura infera, il taoista mirava a seguire una via che, usando una terminologia ermetica, può essere definita 'regia', praticando discipline alchemiche, respiratorie, dietetiche per raggiungere uno stato di immortalità sia fisica che spirituale, libero dai legami del mondo fenomenico, *hic et semper*.

²² Cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise, cit.*, pp. 10-11; J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, cit.*, vol. V/2 (1974), pp. 84-85 e "La cosmologia della Cina primitiva," in Blacker-Loewe, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 sgg.

²³ Vi sono tre grafie del nome: 崑崙, 崑崙, 崑崙. Secondo il *Ti-ming ta tz'u-tien* (p. 794), la prima è la più antica. Sull'etimologia del nome cf. L. de Saussure, "L'étymologie du nom des monts K'ouen-louen," *T'oung-pao*, XX (1921), pp. 370-371: "KL exprime, en effet, la sphéricité de la voûte des cieux, dont les gigantesques montagnes tibétaines semblaient être le prolongement ou le support (...) L'expression KL (...) semble donc avoir signifié «les hauteurs de bout du monde»..." Nei secoli successivi il nome venne attribuito a diverse contrade e popoli dell'Indocina, della Melanesia e persino al Madagascar, sempre comunque a luoghi posti al limite del mondo noto ai Cinesi, "...c'est-à-dire à des pays qui sont censés toucher à la voûte des cieux..." (de Saussure, *ibid*). Sulla tarda evoluzione del nome cf. G. Ferrand, "Le K'ouen-louen et les anciennes navigations interocéaniques dans les mers du sud," *Journal As.*, XI° s., vol. XIII (1919), pp. 5-69 e XIV (1919), pp. 239-333 e 431-492.

²⁴ Cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise, cit.*, pp. 125-126, che riporta un passaggio dallo *Shen-i ching*, citato nello *Shui-ching chu* di Li Tao-yüan (m. 527 d.C.):

"...On K'un-lun there rests a copper pillar whose heights reach unto the very heavens; it is named the Pillar of Heaven. It is three thousands *li* wide in girth and it curls around like unto a crooked knife. Below there are the meandering houses, the establishments of the nine courts of the immortal beings..." Sulla datazione e attribuzione dello *Shen-i ching* ('Classico dei prodigi') cf. Chang Hsin-cheng, *Wei shu t'ung-k'ao*, Shanghai, 1957, vol. II, p. 1041.

²⁵ MTTC, HNT e *Li-sao* lo chiamano *Hsüan-p'u* 縣圖; lo HNT ha anche una variante omofona, con l'aggiunta in basso a sinistra del radicale 61. Per inciso va anche notato che l'ideogramma *Hsüan* registra anche il significato secondario di 'pericoloso'.

²⁶ Cf. *Index to Erh-ya*, 'Harvard-Yenching Inst. Sin. Index Ser.', suppl. 18, 10.1., p. 21 (repr. Taipei, 1966).

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.4., p. 20. La stessa opera aggiunge poi (12.3., p. 23) che il *K'un-lun* è il luogo da cui sgorga il fiume *Ho*. Cf. anche lo 'Yü-kung' in B. Karlgren, "The Book of Documents," BMFEA, 11 (1930), p. 17.

²⁸ Cf. *infra*, 1.5.1.

²⁹ HNT, IV, 8b.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Cf. J. S. Major, "Notes on the Nomenclature of Winds and Directions in the Early Han," *T'oung-pao*, LXV/1-3 (1979), p. 79.

³² Cf. *infra*, 1.6.

³³ Questa localizzazione occidentale, unitamente alle tradizioni ebraica (Genesi, II, 8) ed indiana (*Dirghâgama*, 18) che pongono l'Eden a est e il monte cosmico a nord, ha portato K. Unno ("Konron shisuisetsu no chiri shisôshiteki kôsatsu: Butten oyobi kyûgoku seisho shikasetsu to no kanren ni oite," *Shirin*, LXI, pp. 379-393) a concludere che queste tre tradizioni siano derivata da una unica fonte centroasiatica. Cf. inoltre H. G. Quaritch Wales, "The Sacred Mountain in Old Asiatic Religion," *Journ. of the Royal As. Soc.*, 1953, pp. 23-30 e la recensione a Unno di D. Holzman in *Rev. Bibl. du Sinol.*, 4 (1958), pp. 372-3. Il *K'un-lun* è nominato anche in SHC, VI, 3b (a sud), XII, *passim* (a nord-ovest) e XIII, 1b. In quest'ultima sede è posto a est, ma il passaggio è sicuramente interpolato, cf. Mâchen-Helfen, *art. cit.*, p. 565.

³⁴ Per le varie idrografie cf. *infra*, 1.6.

³⁵ Questa misura, assieme alla precedente data in HNT, costituisce una risposta a *T'ien-wen*, 40-41 (tr. Hawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 49): "Where is K'un-lun with its Hanging Garden? How many miles high are its ninefold walls?"

³⁶ Secondo il commento di Ho I-hsing, *K'ai-ming* è il nome dell'animale a nove teste che dà il nome alla porta omonima.

³⁷ Kuo P'u nel suo commento trasforma il mitico arciere in un taoista riferendo che egli chiese l'erba dell'immortalità a *Hsi-wang-mu* e che ottenne il *tao*. Sull'arciero I cf. Karlgren, "Legends and Cults...", *cit.*, p. 269.

³⁸ E' possibile ravvisare in questo passaggio una possibile influenza del mito indiano sulla lotta tra *Garuda* e *Nâgâ*. Il motivo della lotta uccello/serpente è stato ampiamente analizzato da R. Wittkower, "Miraculous Birds," *Journ. of the Warburg and Courtauld Inst.*, I (1937-8), pp. 253-257 e "Eagle and Serpent. A Study in the migration of symbols," *ibidem*, II (1938-9), pp. 293-325.

³⁹ Cf. SHC, VI, 5b e *Index du Changhai King*, (a cura del Centre Franco-Chinois d'Etudes Sinologiques), repr. Taipei, Ch'eng-wen, 1968, p. 6. Secondo Kuo P'u assomiglia a un fegato di bue con due occhi e la sua carne ricresce man mano che viene tagliata (!).

⁴⁰ Il commento di Kuo P'u afferma che la conoscenza viene acquisita mangiandone i frutti.

⁴¹ Ho I-hsing lo identifica con l'albero *chiang* citato in HNT, IV, 2b.

⁴² Commento di Kuo P'u: "Sembra un serpente ma ha quattro zampe. E' della specie dei draghi (*lung*)".

⁴³ Su questo bizzarro copricapo cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, *cit.*, pp. 103-105 e fig. 17.

⁴⁴ Come avviene per l'albero del centro, cf. *infra* 1.4.

⁴⁵ Le due serie complete sono: a) Monti *Ta-yen* (XIV, 1b), *Ho-hsü* (XIV, 3a), *Ming-hsing* (XIV, 3b), *Chiu-ling yü-t'ien*, *T'ung-chi*, *Li-mou* (XIV, 4a), *I-t'ien su-men* (XIV, 5b), *Ho-ming-chün-chi* (*ibid.*); b) Monti *Fêng-chü-yü-men* (XVI, 2b), *Lung* (XVI, 4a), *Ngao-ngao-chü* (XVI, 5b), *Jih-yüeh* (XVI, 4b), *Ch'ang-yang* (XVI, 6b), *Ta-huang* (XVI, 7b). Il monte *Fang* ('Quadrato') assomma le due funzioni. Nello HNT si parla di un *Tung-chi shan* da cui esce il sole (IV, 4a) e del monte *Lo-t'ang wu-jen* ('dei guerrieri di *Lo-t'ang*, IV, 8a).

⁴⁶ Un personaggio analogo è in SHC, II, 5a.

⁴⁷ Cf. H. H. Wilson, *The Vishnu Purāṇa. A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, Calcutta, Punthi Pustak, repr. 1961, pp. 137-139.

⁴⁸ Cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, *cit.*, p. III e 153, nota 140. Un'altra leggenda contenente elementi edilizi è riportata in SHC, VIII, 1b: "...Il ministro di *Kung-*

kung detto *Hsiang-liu* ha nove teste e trova il nutrimento sui nove monti (Kuo P'u: 'Ogni testa si nutre degli esseri che vivono su un monte'). Abita nelle paludi e nelle valli desolate. Il grande *Yü* lo uccise e per il suo sangue maleodorante (in quel luogo) non si poté più seminare i cinque cereali. *Yü* eresse attorno a quel luogo una triplice barriera, ma per tre volte il sangue trasudò. Allora *Yü* eresse la torre detta *Chung-ti* ('di tutte le Divinità'). Essa sorge a nord del *K'un-lun* (...) *Hsiang-liu* ha nove facce umane e corpo di serpente turchino. A oriente sorge la torre di *Kung-kung*, sorvegliata ai quattro angoli da serpenti che guardano a sud...' Il testo esprime la possibilità di scongiurare le influenze negative organizzando uno spazio attorno ad un sostituto analogico dell'*axis mundi*, mutando cioè il *chaos* in *kosmos*, l'*ἀπειρων* in *πέραρς*.

⁴⁹ Cf. Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, cit., p. 111.

⁵⁰ In SHC, XVI, 6b viene descritto il paese di *Shou-ma* (nel Gran Deserto occidentale) i cui abitanti stanno ritti senza gettare ombra e gridano senza che si oda eco. In quel paese vi è un calore tale che non ci si può muovere (cf. *Chao-hun*, 4b). Il commento di Kuo P'u afferma che il loro *ch'i* e la loro conformazione fisica (*hsing*) sono diversi dall'uomo comune. Il commento di Ho I-hsing parla del paese di *Pu-ti*, i cui abitanti non danno ombra a mezzogiorno. Sull'albero *Chien* cf. M. Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, Parigi, PUF, 1959, vol. I, p. 314, nota 1; O. Mänchen-Helfen, art. cit., pp. 576-578.

⁵¹ Il testo è oscuro. Si tratta probabilmente di nove alberelli minori, in simmetria coi metaforici nove 'rami' superiori.

⁵² Cf. *infra*, 1.5.1.

⁵³ L'albero *Fu* è menzionato in HNT, IV, 3a; *Li-sao*, 28b; SHC, IX, 3a-b e XIV, 5a. Secondo quest'ultimo passaggio l'albero sta nel Gran Deserto orientale, è alto 300 *li* e sui suoi rami stanno i dieci soli che escono a turno; in una valle sottostante vi sono delle sorgenti calde che servono ai soli per lavarsi, o meglio, per essere lavati da *Hsi-ho*. L'albero *Jo* è menzionato in HNT, IV, 3a; *Li-sao*, 28b; SHC, XVIII, 3a e XVII, 7a. Secondo quest'ultimo testo, esso sta sul monte *Tung-yeh* ed è rosso, con foglie turchine e fiori scarlatti. Kuo P'u aggiunge che i suoi fiori splendono di luce rossa e illuminano il terreno sottostante, una chiara metafora del tramonto. Su questi alberi cf. G. Schlegel, "Problèmes Géographiques," I, *T'oung-pao*, I° s., III (1892), pp. 101-168; Erkes, op. cit., pp. 49-51. Su *Hsi-ho* e i dieci soli cf. H. Maspero, "Légendes mythologiques dans le Chou King," *Journal Asiatique*, CCIV (1924), pp. 9-28; B. Karlgren, "Legends and Cults...", cit., p. 266.

⁵⁴ Il testo aggiunge che "Yü lavorò su questo monte" e Kuo P'u spiega che egli tagliò tutti gli alberi che vi crescevano; l'*Index du SHC*, cit., p. 29 puntualizza che dopo di ciò, pose sulla roccia rossa l'albero *Luan*.

⁵⁵ Della raccolta delle erbe magiche si parla anche in SHC, XVI, 2b-3a; essa è compiuta da varie sciamane (dette *Hsien*, *Chi*, *Fen*, *P'eng*, *Ku*, *Chen*, *Li*, *Ti*, *Hsieh* e *Lo*) che salgono e scendono dal monte *Ling* ('dei Prodigii'), posto nel Gran Deserto occidentale, a est del monte di *Hsi-wang-mu*. Riguardo all'albero *Luan*, il commento di Ho I-hsing afferma che i suoi frutti hanno proprietà sovra-naturali.

⁵⁶ Vanno infine menzionate, per completare il quadro dei simbolismi vegetali, le tradizioni sugli alberi detti *San-sang* ('Tre Gelsi'), sull'albero detto *P'an-mu* e sul 'cereale arborecente' (*mu-he*). Dei primi si trova menzione in HNT, IV, 8b; SHC, VIII, 3b e III, 11a. Secondo tutti e tre i testi questi alberi sono simili a colonne (senza rami) e secondo lo SHC sono alti 100 *jen* (800 piedi). La sezione III aggiunge che accanto ad essi crescono gli alberi *Pai-kuo* ('dai Cento Frutti'), sorvegliati da numerosi serpenti. Il *P'an-mu* è menzionato in SHC, XVII, 2a. Il testo dice solo

che è vasto 1000 *li*. Il commento di Ho I-hsing parla di un pesce che si attorce per 3000 *li* sul monte *Tu-suo*, nel mare orientale. Sotto di esso vi è una porta detta 'Porta nordorientale dei *kuei*' da cui escono ed in cui entrano i 10.000 *kuei*. Sull'albero stanno due *shen* d'aspetto umano che si chiamano *Shen-t'u* e *Yü-lei*, che hanno il compito di castigare i *kuei* che fanno del male agli uomini. Questi due esseri entrarono in seguito nella tradizione popolare come numi tutelari delle porte. Cf. Chavannes, *Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, repr. Leida, Brill, 1967, vol. I, p. 38; Granet, *op. cit.*, p. 303. Le opere di questi autori, per inciso non scevre di scorrettezze, vanno prese *cum grano*.

⁵⁷ Per i testi relativi cf. *supra*, 1.3.

⁵⁸ Per l'albero dell'immortalità cf. SHC, XI, 4b e *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, XIV, 9b; per l'erba, HNT, IV, 5a; SHC, XI, 5a. Su entrambi e sugli altri alberi cf. Mänchen-Helfen, *op. cit.*, p. 578 e 582-586.

⁵⁹ Sull'albero *lang-kan* cf. Erkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44, note, 71-77; de Rosny, *Chan-Hai-King: Antique géographie chinoise*, Parigi, 1891, p. 75; J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. IV, p. 127; F. Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*, Shanghai, 1885, pp. 59, 76 e 246. Cf. anche HNT, IV, 8a-b.

⁶⁰ Il tema del 'paese di Cuccagna' nella tradizione popolare è stato ampiamente analizzato da G. Cocchiara, *Il paese di Cuccagna*, Torino, Einaudi, 1956, pp. 159-187.

⁶¹ Cf. Mänchen-Helfen, *op. cit.*, pp. 570-577.

⁶² Il testo ricorda SHC, XII, 1a, in cui si parla di tre uccelli che nutrono *Hsi-wang-mu*. Cf. 1.5.1.

⁶³ Altri 'paesi di Cuccagna' sono descritti in SHC, XVIII, 2b-3a (accanto al tumulto di *Hou-chi*); in *Lieh-tzu*, II, 1a-b (Paese di *Hua-hsü* 'della Spontaneità') e II, 1b-2a (monte *Lieh-ku-yeh*); in *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, XXII, 9a (Paese di *San-wei*). In un altro paese presso la sepoltura di *Hou-chi* (SHC, IV, 9a) vivono degli uomini per metà pesci che muoiono e rinascono.

⁶⁴ Cf. *supra*, nota 14.

⁶⁵ Su *Ch'ang-ho* cf. Major, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 sgg.

⁶⁶ Cf. *infra*, 1.6.

⁶⁷ Altri esempi di ascesa mistica al *K'un-lun* (cavalcando le nubi) sono menzionati in *Ch'u-tz'u*, 'Yüan-yü' (tr. in Hawkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 167 sgg.) e 'Chiu-ko' (ibid., p. 42; A. Waley, *The Nine Songs. A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*, Londra, Allen & Unwin, 1956², p. 47). Cf. inoltre SHC, XVIII, 2a, in cui si parla dell'immortale *Pê-kao* che sale e scende dal cielo cavalcando le nubi dalla vetta del monte *Ch'ao* ('dell'Origine'); SHC, XVI, 8a, in cui si parla del popolo *Hu* (discendente di *Ling-ch'i*, nipote di *Shen-nung*), i cui componenti possono a loro piacere salire al cielo e discenderne.

⁶⁸ Sul tema del guardiano cf. Eliade, *Traité... cit.*, pp. 299-302.

⁶⁹ Cf. SHC, XI, 1a, dove si parla di *Wei*, ministro di *Erh-fu*, uccisore, assieme al padrone, di *Ya-yü*. Per ciò venne quindi incatenato ad un albero su un monte a nord-ovest di *K'ai-ti*; in SHC, XI, 5a, sei sciamane (*P'eng*, *Ti*, *Yang*, *Li*, *Fan*, *Hsiang*) stanno attorno al cadavere di *Ya-yü* e cercano di resuscitarlo con l'erba dell'immortalità (*pu-ssu chih yo*). Qui il mostro è descritto con testa umana su corpo anguiforme. Infine, in SHC, III, 6a, esso viene descritto con corpo di bue dal pelo rosso, zoccoli di cavallo e volto umano. Cf. M. Granet, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-381.

⁷⁰ Cf. il genio di SHC, XVI, 5b, che ha corpo di tigre bianco-maculato, volto umano e una coda bianca.

⁷¹ Basti pensare alle stravaganti argomentazioni di Forke, che l'identificò con la regina di Saba, o a quelle di H. A. Giles, che la trasformò in *Hera*, trasformando altresì *Tung-wang-kung* in *Zeus* (!). Cf. A. Forke, "Mu Wang und die Königin von Saba," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Or. Sprachen zu Berlin*, VII (1904), pp. 117-172; H. A. Giles, *Adversaria Sinica*, Shanghai, Kelly & Walsh, 1914, pp. 15-20; ugualmente priva di fondamento, se pure più scusabile essendo la proposta di un non-sinologo, è la identificazione di *Hsi-wang-mu* con la 'Morte', operata da Eliade (*Le chamanisme...*, cit., p. 484), che cita comunque R. Wilhelm, *Chinesische Volksmärchen*, Jena, 1927. L'essere 'regina del paradiso occidentale' non corrisponde affatto, ci sembra, all'essere una metafora della Morte.

⁷² *Ways to Paradise*, cit., pp. 86-126; cf. inoltre H. H. Dubs, "An ancient Chinese Mystery Cult," cit., pp. 221-240 e "Han 'Hill-Censers'," in *Studia Sinica. Sinological Studies dedicated to B. Karlgren*, Copenhagen, 1959, pp. 259-264. Importante è infine la puntualizzazione etimologica di Karlgren, "Legends and Cults...", cit., p. 271, che traduce il termine 'Hsi-wang-mu' come "the Acres, farmed land (the oasis) of the Western King," basandosi sull'omofonia di due caratteri.

⁷³ L'episodio del banchetto descritto nel MTTC è ripreso, con l'aggiunta di considerazioni moraleggianti, in *Lieh-tzu*, III, 2a.

⁷⁴ Il testo aggiunge che *Hsi-wang-mu* comanda "ai *li* e ai *wu-ts'an* celesti". La controversia su questo tormentato passaggio è ricostruita in Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*, cit., p. 90 e 149, note 16-17. Ho I-hsing identifica *li* e *wu-ts'an* con due costellazioni; Maspero, "Legendes...", cit., pp. 35 e 88-89 ne fa delle forze maligne e chiama *Hsi-wang-mu* "déesse des épidémies"; Dubs traduce dapprima "She has charge of Heaven's calamities upon the five [types of] crimes" ("An ancient Chinese...", cit., p. 224) e in seguito "She has charge of Heaven's evil spirits and [the comet] 'Destruction by Half'" ("Han 'Hill-Censers'", cit., p. 260), riprendendo così in parte l'identificazione astronomica di Ho I-hsing. Il testo dello SHC prosegue poi in questo modo (20a): "...Vi sono degli animali in quel luogo che hanno aspetto di cane, maculati come leopardi e con corna bovine. Si chiamano *Chiao*. Il loro verso è come l'abbaiare del cane. Quando appaiono lo stato gode di grande abbondanza. Vi sono poi degli uccelli rossi simili ai fagiani; si chiamano *Hsing-yü*. Mangiano pesce e fanno un verso simile al *lu* (Ho I-hsing afferma che il carattere è un *chia-chieh* per l'omofono 'Daino'). Quando compaiono, nello stato avvengono inondazioni."

⁷⁵ Anche qui il testo non è chiarissimo. Sembra infatti che il primo guardiano viva sul *K'un-lun* e *Hsi-wang-mu* viva sul monte *Yen-huo*. Tale monte è comunque in strettissimo rapporto col *K'un-lun* di cui, con ogni probabilità, è una vetta.

⁷⁶ Kuo P'u commenta: "Le sue acque non sostengono una piuma di oca selvatica". L'argomento del *Jo-shui* (letteralmente 'acque deboli') è stato variamente dibattuto. Cf. Hirth, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-293 e Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, cit., vol. III (1959), p. 608. Needham parla, come probabile origine della tradizione, di "natural occurrence of petroleum seepages". In Erodoto, *Historiae*, III, è menzionata una fonte in Etiopia (Ἰθῶπι ἀσθενές) che non sostiene nè il legno nè altri materiali più leggeri; analoga notizia è in Strabone, *Geographia*, XV, 703.

⁷⁷ Cf. SHC, VIII, 3a.

⁷⁸ Il testo aggiunge poi (IV, 8b): "...lo splendore delle torce si spande per 1000 *li* attorno alle isole del fiume *Ho*. La Porta del Drago (*lung-men*) è tra i gorgi del fiume *Ho*..."

⁷⁹ Kuo P'u specifica che Il fiume *Ho* nasce a nord-est, il Fiume Rosso a sud-est, il Fiume *Yang* a nord-ovest e il Fiume Nero a nord-ovest (probabilmente una svista per nord-est).

⁸⁰ Il testo tra parentesi non compare nell'edizione *Ssu-pu pei-yao*, ma è registrato in quella *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*.

⁸¹ Un'altra idrografia è in 'Yü-kung' (tr. Karlgren, *cit.*, pp. 16-17): in essa compaiono il fiume *Jo*, il Fiume Nero (*Hêh-shui*), il fiume *Ho* ed il fiume *Yang*.

⁸² Il prototipo di questa fonte può forse essere ravvisato in MTTC, II, 10b; Kuo P'u, nel suo commento a SHC, VII, 3a, riferisce che nel Paese delle Donne (*Nü-tzu kuo*) esiste una 'fonte dalle acque gialle' che rende pregne le donne che vi si bagnano.

FAITH IS ALL! EMOTION AND DEVOTION
IN A GOAN SECT

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Most papers written on *bhakti* focus on the devotional sects that stem from the spiritual upwelling of early medieval India. The saints and poets that inspired millions of Indians, the vernacular songs and literature that developed and the ideas and practices of the numerous sects that were established and in many cases still flourish—these are the subjects of “mainstream” *bhakti* literature. This is natural and proper. This paper, however, looks in a different direction, at first glance perhaps an aside, but one which I think is relevant to research on contemporary Hinduism and modern India. The paper is a study of Christ Ashram, a sect with headquarters in the Goan village of Nuvem. It is based on field work the author did in 1978-79 but does not pretend to be exhaustive. Rather the paper aims to put such a sect in the wider context of Indian devotional religion. There are four sections. First, a discussion of *bhakti* as devotional religion and the problems I have, as an anthropologist, putting *bhakti* in the world picture, rather than just in an historical Indian context. Second, I deal with a number of anthropological views of Hinduism and religion in India. This must be done in order to fit the various aspects of an overtly Catholic sect into the framework of Indian religion. Third, a description of Christ Ashram, its background, atmosphere, leaders and devotees. This is likely the first such description of a Catholic-Hindu devotional sect in the literature. The fourth section is the presentation of my conclusions, combining *bhakti* or devotional religion, syncretism and the widest view of Indian religion.

First of all, what is *bhakti* and is it solely an Indian phenomenon? I admit to difficulties in pinning down the “facts” and making decisive statements about these questions. I place “facts” in quotes because I wonder if we can really come to grips with and establish any facts on this subject for once and for all. We are dealing here with an immense web of belief and action, stretching throughout

many centuries, involving the most complex constellations of human feelings and knowledge that in some senses vary even from individual to individual. As an Indianist I am aware of the usual meanings attached to the word "*bhakti*." The literature refers to it as a type of devotional cult that arose in South India in the first millenium of the Christian era, with the possibility of some influence from Christianity.¹ Even before that, one may see precursors to *bhakti* in the South Indian worship of Murukan and in *yaksha* worship. Elements of such devotional faith may be of great antiquity, but the form I shall be referring to in this paper stems from the post-Gupta period. Followers of the path of medieval Indian *bhakti* had no need of scriptural knowledge, no need to meditate or develop a particular mental concentration in order to know God. They did not try to achieve their ends through good works (though certain texts may refer to the importance of doing one's appointed work) or through the proper carrying out of appropriate rites and ceremonies. *Bhakti* devotees cared nothing for caste or class—they thought only of God.

"The whole universe was filled with joy.
I became everything and enjoyed everything...
Death and birth are now no more.
I am free from the littleness of "me" and "mine."²

Saint-poets like Tukaram of Maharashtra, just quoted, travelled the countryside and inspired millions with their message. *Bhakti*, the path of Faith and Devotion, gave hope and light to the mass of Indians who had no time to meditate and no literacy or classical knowledge to read the sacred texts. *Bhakti* texts did develop and their existence is often credited with making vernaculars into literary languages. It is often said that *bhakti* movements did other things as well. They enabled Hinduism to establish itself in India over the once-ascendant Buddhism and Jain religion. Both Buddhism and Jainism were profoundly influenced by *bhakti* themselves. They brought a number of classical Hindu concepts to the common man. They effected a long lasting compromise between Hindu and Muslim and provided the ethos for political entities, most important of which was the Maratha Kingdom.³ Besides the figures of the saint-poets like Tukaram, Mirabai, Surdas, Chaitanya and Tulsidas, *bhakti* movements produced the *kir-*

tan, (hymn singing), their own arrangements of guru-religious order-lay community relationships and their own forms of social drama-pilgrimages and festivals. All this is well-documented and can be found in religious, historical, and anthropological literature on India.

As one who has lived among Indians for a number of years, I know what many Indians associate with the word “*bhakti*.” There may not be one common, identical meaning, yet there is certainly the feeling of an all-consuming, powerful faith in or love for God. Sometimes this great feeling is transferred to the figure of one’s guru, but it always refers eventually to God. Arguments can be made as to the exact nature of the connection of guru to God. Words like metaphor, substitute, likeness, symbol or personification might be used, yet finally it is not the particular focus which is important but the being consumed. The mad devotee, the mad lover of a Universal God is a commanding figure. (*Pramatta* in Sanskrit may overlap with the idea of madness in English but it can also be translated as “institutionalised charisma”).⁴ The madness therefore demands respect among Indians, not a call to the nearest mental institution. Just as Gandhi embodied an ascetic ideal for millions of Indians, so the passionate devotee with a song on his lips and the flame of God in his wild eyes, without a care for the daily tragedy, may be an ideal for millions of others. Never attained, never attempted, but still for all that, an ideal. Pocock writes that “the word devotion adequately translates *bhakti* but, particularly in popular usage and in certain schools of thought, *bhakti* carries also associations of enthusiasm, fervour and love which the English word has perhaps lost.”⁵ I could not agree more.

So far, we seem to have been able to pin down *bhakti* to some pretty concrete definitions. This is because we are talking of it in the abstract, in nebulous form. The difficulties arise when we try to establish whether or not any particular set of religious practices belong to the *bhakti* path or not and whether certain individuals are following that path or not. That is the problem this paper will wrestle with, so it is impossible to come to conclusions at this early stage. Instead, let us look at the second part of my earlier question. Is *bhakti* only an Indian phenomenon? The historical experience is no doubt unique. The particular constellation of events, symbols,

styles and processes have not been repeated anywhere else. This is hardly surprising. But, take away the word “*bhakti*” and its associations with Sanskrit, Hinduism, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra, and the history of the subcontinent and look abroad from India and there appear a whole host of devotional cults and religions. My problem is distinguishing why devotional religion, *as practised today* in villages in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh or Bengal should be segregated from devotional religion as found in West Africa, Brazil, Haiti, Bali or Mexico. Can we not speak of Brazilian *bhakti* or Yucatan *bhakti*? We do not. In some ways *bhakti* may just be a “code word” for devotional religion in India, all the images it summons up of the medieval milieu notwithstanding. In another sense *bhakti* is only a small part of a nearly universal human phenomenon. I think we will have to speak chiefly of devotional religion in this essay rather than *bhakti* particularly because we are dealing with two classic traditions, Catholic and Hindu, both with developed devotional patterns that have interacted in an Indian environment with particular results. The theme of this volume might propose otherwise, but to me the boundaries between *bhakti*, (may I coin the term “*shudh bhakti*”), and devotional religion at large remain both unclear and porous.

Besides distinguishing Indian devotional religion from the wealth of other traditions that exist, we have to place the particular sect in question, Christ Ashram, in the context of Indian religion. There have been a number of attempts to discuss “levels” in Hinduism. Discussion of different “facets” or “aspects” may be more useful; certainly less insulting to those whose beliefs do not happen to fall under what some social scientist decides is a “high level.” It is useful to look at the work of several authors because their writings bring to the fore a number of relevant issues. We can begin with the contribution of Robert Redfield.⁶ His idea of a division between a Great Tradition and a Little Tradition has permeated the literature. The Great Tradition belongs, according to Redfield, to an elite, usually urban, and has to do with written texts and a reflective outlook on life. The Little Tradition or folk tradition is of the unreflective mass of people, mostly found in the rural areas among non-literate people. Redfield was writing in the widest general sense, but he often cited Indian examples. Although there

can be no argument that in India representative examples of these two “polarities” can be found, in practice such a description creates as many questions as it answers. There are a number of elements of the Great Tradition in the religious life of people who otherwise would be seen as belonging to the Little Tradition. Texts and ceremonies derived from the reflective tradition of ancient centers of religion and learning can be found among the inhabitants of small towns in remote areas. Some villagers may celebrate the festivals of the Great Tradition in much the same way as educated city dwellers. Folk elements may exist in the daily life and practice of sophisticated, “reflective” townsmen. Divisions are not clear cut.

M. N. Srinivas⁷ contributed the idea of there being Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic levels in Indian civilisation. He argues that the Sanskritic level exists all over India in much the same form and is the basic uniting factor for all the otherwise diverse regional cultures. The more Sanskritized one’s customs, rituals and beliefs, the more part of wider, supra-regional civilisation one is. Choice of household deities to worship, pilgrimage destinations, festivals to celebrate, food, drink, occupation, marriage and re-marriage customs... all these are indicators of the level to which one belongs or aspires. As is widely known, Srinivas wrote of “Sanskritization” as well; a process by which castes might move to a higher ranking by conforming to more Sanskritic patterns. There are still problems with this analysis as Lawrence Babb has pointed out.⁸ Sacred texts are associated with the Sanskrit side of things but many texts are not written in Sanskrit. There is no one coherent and definable Sanskritic tradition anyhow. Sanskrit texts have absorbed many ideas from other parts of Indian civilization and permit many practices or put forward ideas that seem unlikely to be derived from the Great Tradition. Finally, and this is most telling as well as most relevant, there are features of popular Hinduism that do not derive from texts or any aspect of the Sanskritic level but are still found all over India. If we talk about texts versus practices of local origin in the style of Redfield and Srinivas we are implying two systems of belief and action but “the evidence suggests... we are dealing with one religious system, not two or more, and that cultural elements of both textual and local provenance are drawn into a single overall

pattern of relationships.’’⁹ I think this observation of Babb’s is very useful here. All over India, and Goa is no exception, various aspects and styles of religious behaviour combine to produce a regional pattern. Different aspects may be at the fore on different occasions and for different people, but rather than call these separate levels or even separate religions, it may be far more useful to look at them all as intrinsically part of the same thing. We shall return to this, as it is one of the chief arguments of the paper.

Rather than using cultural traits to distinguish levels of tradition, other anthropologists have turned to function. David Mandelbaum distinguishes two aspects of religion, the transcendental and the pragmatic.¹⁰ He says that rituals of the first ensure the long-term welfare of society, explain and maintain village institutions, and oversee a proper transition of individuals from one stage of life to the next. Such transcendental rituals deal with the ultimate ends of Man.¹¹ Like Redfield and Srinivas he sees such things as texts, classical language, a regular cyclical round, and great centres (like Rome, Mecca, or Benares) associated with the transcendental aspect. Unlike them, though, he is not defining the term on the basis of these things. The pragmatic rituals deal with local problems, personal benefit, and individual welfare. This aspect of religion contains more that could be called folklore. Pragmatic events are often impromptu, not on a cyclical basis, more local, and the divine beings connected to them are more often explicitly malevolent. Mandelbaum remarks that ‘‘each complex has a generally different set of deities, separate symbol systems, and different rites.’’¹² But in terms of India he notes that there is little or no rivalry between the two aspects. The transcendental complex is the domain of higher castes but lower ones participate too and revere the same gods in some of the same rituals. The lower castes preside over pragmatic style rituals but higher caste people may find these effective and attend them as well. ‘‘All agree that the transcendental deities are far superior in power and importance, but most villagers also believe that the pragmatic gods have their own sphere of power over men.’’¹³ In addition to talking merely of such aspects of religion, Mandelbaum also distinguishes two types of religious practitioner that go along with the two aspects. The transcendental complex is presided over by priests (usually

Brahmins in India) who may have hereditary rights to their calling. They are given high prestige and social ranking and should be models of behaviour and virtue for others. "Their clients are traditionally in a stable, bound relationship to them. The practitioners of the pragmatic complex may be curers or diagnosticians or exorcisers; in many regions they are shamans... There may also be ritual caretakers and technicians who look after the shrines of the local gods,... These (people) achieve the role, rather than have it ascribed to them because of hereditary calling."¹⁴ A shaman is not a behavioural model for others, his clients are not bound to him in any set way and he is usually from the lower castes.

Gerald Berreman follows much the same line as Mandelbaum in his essay "Brahmins and Shamans in Pahari Religion."¹⁵ He examines the differing functions and roles of the two types of religious practitioner. In his conclusions he says that "shamans and other non-Brahmanical practitioners are not within the great tradition of Hinduism, but they are all-India in spread and hence are part of the pan-Indian Hindu vernacular, or little tradition."¹⁶ This is correct but by sticking to the Great Tradition-Little Tradition dichotomy Berreman has really missed the point. There is a single all-India religious tradition which encompasses elements of both "Great" and "Little," both Brahmin and Shaman. The shamans *are* part of a pan-Indian Hindu vernacular but there is no reason to call this the Little Tradition. There are too many linkages and interpenetrations with non-local traditions. Mandelbaum avoids this confusion and maintains a stricter functionalist viewpoint. He writes

"Villagers do not insist on an absolute segregation of the two complexes (transcendental and pragmatic) because they see all beliefs and acts that are directed towards the supernatural as part of the same overarching reality. For certain purposes they use mainly patterns of the one kind and for other purposes mainly those of the other. Both are taken as necessary and useful aspects of religion."¹⁷

Functional analysis of religion and the tying of religion to social organisation are one way of looking at religious experience. Rex Jones feels that the ideas of Berreman and Mandelbaum set up a misleading dichotomy about pragmatic practitioners or shamans. Those authors emphasize the shaman's role in society as opposed to human belief and experience.¹⁸ Jones says that he follows Eliade

“...in holding the shaman’s ecstatic experience as the ‘primary phenomenon’.”¹⁹ I prefer to remain between the functional and experiential poles of the argument. I particularly admire Lawrence Babb’s book, *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India* because he deals in an elegant way with both functional and symbolic interpretations of religious experience and practice. He incorporates much of Mandelbaum’s analysis but adds two very important ideas. The first is to emphasize that “a single symbolic and conceptual paradigm underlies understandings of human and divine hierarchy and supplies the structural core of most if not all... ritual.”²⁰ In other words, the hierarchy of the gods is conceived of in the same way as the human one and ritual approaches to different levels of god will mirror in some way different levels of social behaviour. This will be seen in Christ Ashram, where people of a particular social group express feelings in a ritual way that corresponds to their status in Goan society but also reflects certain aspects of Goan social history. The second of Babb’s ideas is that he points out that texts, associated with the “transcendental” aspect of religion according to Mandelbaum, are often used for “pragmatic” purposes. We shall see that Catholic texts, those from the Catholic “Great Tradition,” are used at Christ Ashram to legitimate shamanistic and certainly un-Catholic practice. The line separating functional and symbolic aspects of a sect is not easy to draw. This is especially true when it comes to ritual. There is really no clear separation. Rituals say something about social order and play a part in social integration. The myths that create the rituals’ relevance transmit similar messages. But both myth and ritual do more than merely justify social structure and reflect approved social behaviour. They make deep statements about human life and its underlying meanings. They build up through repeated lessons that social construction each people knows as “Reality.” It is in this area that I think ritual activity is most deeply satisfying to participants. Ritual as symbolic activity is educational in the most intense way. Content and style, as primary facets of ritual are both highly instructive, not only to the anthropologist, but to participants and witnesses. Content is of course what is being said and style, the way such content is expressed. The content “expressed in rituals may be the same, while the ritual “styles” in which they are

expressed may be different.’’²¹ This is one of the essential points I want to make in this paper. Though much of Christ Ashram’s symbolism or “style” is Catholic, the content is identical with like Hindu sects. Indeed, as will become apparent, even the style—ritual and symbol—derives ultimately from an all-Indian pattern. Transcendental and pragmatic, Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, textual and non-textual may be seen as different ways of saying the same thing. Instead of devising methods of cutting up Indian religion into separate parts, we have a way of showing its essential unity.

The rest of the essay is devoted to a description of Christ Ashram and an attempt to place its ritual—content and style—in the framework of Indian religion. I shall argue that there are both transcendental and pragmatic aspects in evidence, that its style is most important to the analysis, and the use of unrestrained fervour and devotion, as well as the lack of attention to caste, class or religion, links this sect to the Indian tradition of *bhakti*. There are also links to the syncretic Afro-Catholic cults of the New World.

Christ Ashram: a Goan Sect

Goa, besides being a well-known tourist destination and erstwhile “hippie heaven,” is also a Union Territory of India of some 1,800 square miles on the west coast of India some 200 miles south of Bombay. After 451 years of Portuguese rule, this small region has a culture quite unlike any other part of India. There should be no doubt, however, that Goan culture is one more variant of the vast array of cultures that make up the Indian whole. The approximately 800,000 Goans who live in their beautiful land (there are large numbers of Goans outside Goa—in Bombay, East Africa, the Middle East, and North America) are Catholics (38%), Hindus (60%) and Muslims (2%). They speak Konkani, Marathi, English, Portuguese, and Urdu and write their Konkani in four scripts. Both Catholics and Hindus belong to one of the many castes in the usual Indian manner. Some of the lower castes of both religions are actually former aboriginal (*adivasi*) groups now absorbed into the wider social system. There is ample cultural diversity if one wants to analyze the society in such terms. I have argued

elsewhere that in fact there is a very strong case for stating that there is an underlying Goan regional culture and identity that unites Goans in symbolic terms.²² This essay too, though not aimed at the particular issue, may be seen as further strengthening my case. Commonly shared symbols and rituals lead to perceptions of common values and identity. A common, uniting Goan world view may be traced through several institutions of Goan society, especially religious ones.

Class cuts across lines of religion, language, and caste. Since 1961 when the Indian Army ousted the Portuguese in a lightning campaign, Goa has been undergoing very rapid social and economic change. Iron ore mining and export with a mushrooming of related industries and services, mechanization of fishing, agricultural improvements for greater production of rice, coconut, cashews and fruit, rapid expansion of banking, insurance, transport, and the tourist trade, a great increase in the availability of education—all these things have created a new and powerful class of capitalists, a substantial educated middle class of managers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, small businessmen, and public servants, and a growing number of low-paid workers, waiters, messengers, drivers, guards and the like. The majority of Goans still live in rural areas. Farmers, fishermen and agricultural labourers are still a large percentage of the population. The traditional socio-economic structure of the villages has been disrupted. Political control has passed from one elite to another. New forms of necessary knowledge, new kinds of prestigious activity, and new and only partially-understood institutions have brought a great deal of confusion and uncertainty into the lives of many Goans. It is in this context—rapid change on the one hand and a basic unity arising from unique historical and cultural circumstances—that we should view Christ Ashram.

I went to Goa at the end of 1978 to do research on the inter-relationships of syncretism, tolerance and education and to look at Goan culture from the point of view of its being an *Indian* culture rather than an island of the west somehow transported to palm-fringed Asian shores. In the course of my work I visited a beautiful 16th century church and seminary at Rachol, in the district of Salcete in the Velhas Conquistas.²³ Talking with a priest and some

of the young seminarians, I first heard of Christ Ashram. They did not refer to it by name, only as a popular and certainly low-class sort of cult in the village of the same district. They mentioned exorcism and penitence in various forms and said that it attracted both Catholics and Hindus. These things were told in a laughing way and all were very positive that the cult had nothing to do with the Church. My interest was aroused and in the next few months I made several visits to the cult and talked with a number of Goans about it. It happened that a committee had made an investigation into Christ Ashram on behalf of the Goan Archdiocese. Although the report itself remained confidential I spoke to three who had participated, Fr. Antonio Pereira S. J., Fr. Joaquim de Melo S. J. and Dr. Adelia Costa, a psychiatrist, all of whom had considerable knowledge of the cult. These discussions were of considerable interest and I found their opinions valuable. There were also three pieces of popular journalism dealing with the cult of which I could locate two. These were in the women's bi-weekly *Femina* and the national news magazine, also bi-weekly, *India Today*. The first saw the cult as a racket; the second dwelt on sex. Religious "rackets" are obviously according to the eye of the beholder. To emphasise sex in the midst of a number of people so surely desperate for help is to qualify for some sort of award for cynical journalism. These articles are mentioned by way of illustrating the lack of any previously published material and to account in part for the unfavourable light in which many Goans see Christ Ashram.

Christ Ashram is only a short walk from a main road, up a side road that winds among low, dry, but green hills of hot red earth and gravel. One passes small peasant houses, grain piled in yards being pecked over by chickens, sleepy dogs lying around, dome-shaped hay stacks. The cult centre is in the countryside, though it falls within the area of Nuvem village. Christ Ashram has sprung up in the yard of its founder, Miguel Colaço, of whom much will be said later on. The yard is enclosed by a roughly-square white fence, low, with a white-painted chain a foot or so inside on a separate set of posts. These posts are painted with a yellow and black serpent motif. The serpent's head is visible at the top. Around the fence and chain are fourteen small red crosses on the posts, each numbered with a Roman numeral 1 to 14 and with a small bluish

picture attached. These are the Stations of the Cross. The main gate has a high arch made of white-painted iron pipe. It is topped with a large cross and a large colour picture of Jesus bearing an inscription in Romanized Konkani. Other gates also have crosses above them, but are smaller. One faces the road also, another leads to the farmyard next door. All the crosses are electrified as are the Colaço house on the west side of the yard and the central *pandal* or little pavilion which is the focus of worship and religious activity. The place is spidery with wires. The Colaço house has at one end a cook shack/store room with a low ceiling, on the other, an “inner sanctum” of pictures of Christ and other Catholic figures. There are also photographs of Miguel and the sect’s activities taken by previous visitors. The main feature of the enclosure is the small *pandal*, an open-sided pavilion in the center of the red gravel and dirt yard, underneath a large jackfruit tree. It has a corrugated roof and is supported by eight columns. Three on each side have coloured patterns on a white background, one with the serpent motif, one with a grape vine design and one with just green foliage. On the floor, at one end, centred and central to all activities is a white-washed stone or cement cross with a stone altar beside it, set on a wider cement plinth raised an inch off the floor. Just behind this central object is a large cross of dark wood, the focus of much attention. Nailed to it is a smaller cross, really a crucifix, with a plaster Jesus, his wounds showing in vivid red. (This was donated by a Bombay devotee). On each side of the central altar and these crosses is an iron icon stand with three rising tiers of candle holders. Four large coloured prints dominate the icon stand—St. Francis of Assisi holding a child, the Madonna, St. Michael and Fatima—though these are changed from time to time. There are several other, smaller pictures of Christ. Above the altar, crosses and icon stand is a wooden “tympanum.” At the bottom (we are describing the inside wall) there is painted background foliage and the snake again. Just above this, two medallions showing Adam and Eve happy with the animals and the same pair tempted by the snake and fruit. Above this are waves of pink and white clouds, angels and horn-blowing cherubim peeping out, all with Indian faces. “Sorvesporak Jai Jai” (“Glory to the Lord”) is inscribed in large Roman letters. Finally, at the very top, is a white-bearded

Indian God with angel's wings and a benign look. The whole front area is festooned with fresh flower garlands. Each saintly picture as well as each cross has its garland. Outside, there is a heavy wooden cross stuck into the ground to the north and south of the *pandal*. Both are thickly studded with nails, whose points are protruding. A large, thick post, made of a tree trunk, not entirely straight, stands on the north side of the *pandal* in the sun, beside one of the nail-studded crosses. Two heavy chains are attached to it, one black, one white. Outside the cult enclosure are one or two rude dwellings to house devotees.

The story of the founding of Christ Ashram has already assumed a mythical character. As with any myth, it is difficult to penetrate to some "objective" truth. One version is that in the late 1960s a boy found a small cross in the vicinity of Nuvem and gave it to Miguel Colaço. Since then it has been lost. But Miguel took this as a sign that he should cure people. He put up the whitewashed cross, altar and plinth. At first he only healed people one by one without much in the way of ceremony. Another version of the story is that Miguel Colaço was a labourer. He worked on the docks in Panjim along the Mandovi River as well as in the iron mines of Bicholim District. In Goan terms he led a rather dissolute life, having a child by a woman other than his wife. He found a cross in the mines and started performing miracles of curing. He prospered in this line of "work," left the mines and returned home to Nuvem. I cannot vouch for either of these stories. They are part of the mystique slowly being built up around the cult.

Miguel Colaço is a short, dark man, thick set and curly-haired. It is difficult to judge his age but perhaps he was born in the early 1930s. He was definitely born into a very poor family; Catholic and of lower caste. Miguel was sent to look after cattle and buffalo as a child and never went to school. He is illiterate to this day and speaks only Konkani. He has two married daughters and a son who is a telex operator and has a data processing diploma. Miguel is not a man of the world. He sticks close to home and is only too aware of his lack of education. Some years after Miguel began his healing activities, Eugenio Gonsalves arrived on the scene. Eugenio is perhaps ten years younger than Miguel, large, with a beatific face and heavy set neck. He comes from a different background entirely.

He speaks English and Portuguese as well as his native Konkani. He spent some time at the Pilar Seminary in Goa and is said to have some eminent relatives. Since his arrival, Christ Ashram has expanded into its present state. Eugenio said, "I had been searching and praying for 20 years, since I was ten, to find a meaning in life and an understanding." He told one person that he had originally brought his sister's daughter to Miguel to be cured.²⁴ "When I got here I stayed 15 days without taking off my sandals. I fasted." He was stunned and drawn to the place. He had several visions of how the whole area was formed. "I was inspired to go up to these mountains here which are very holy... Now these hills are called Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit and God-Father. I saw the bed on which Jesus was seated."²⁵ After these visions he designed the *pandal* and the whole yard without anyone's permission, "not even Miguel's." "I was inspired to do it." Eugenio burns with zeal. While Miguel concentrates on healing and is believed to have magic powers—he is the figure to whom I would refer as a shaman, as being a "pragmatic" religious practitioner, and firmly in the Indian tradition—Eugenio concentrates on Christ and Christian symbolism. He has a more "modern" approach. He has had Christ Ashram envelopes and stationery printed. He has sent the message of his belief to 47 heads of state around the world. He sends annual messages to the people of Goa through paid advertisements in local papers and has written to some Jesuits and Church figures telling them to realize their errors and turn over a new leaf! If he is lacking in subtlety he is not lacking in chutzpa. Eugenio, it is said, had a long history of failures before he came to Christ Ashram. He failed at the Pilar Seminary after only a short time. His version is, "I left to serve Jesus Christ." Now he wears white clothing and plays the role of Chief "priest" reciting the litany and other prayers, leading the singing. He never leaves the site of Christ Ashram, claiming he must be there at all times. It is tempting to say he has found a place safe from the possibility of failure and one where he has a needed role.

At one time there were apparently fifteen original "members" of Christ Ashram of whom twelve have left. The three who remain are Eugenio and two young women. All wear white and have special roles. Mafalda Sequeira comes from another district of Goa and

was about 25 in 1979. She originally came to Christ Ashram to be cured of a spell she believed a certain person had put on her. She has stayed and thrived. Eugenio remarked, "When she came she was like that (holding up a finger)... now see how healthy she is." No doubt, she is healthy. Mafalda plays a most central role, one that will be discussed shortly. It is very possible that she thrives on the attention she gets. The third "member" is a Hindu girl with matted hair and an animal look. She seldom speaks and is simple-minded if not mentally retarded. Though she wears the white clothing of the Ashram, her main duty is to attend Mafalda and participate in all the rituals.

Miguel, Eugenio, Mafalda, and the Hindu girl preside over a daily round of activity that remains constant. There are services at ten o'clock, noon and again at three. Besides these there are special services—prayers by Miguel and assembled devotees—for particular individuals. These must be booked ahead. Miguel is often booked out some three weeks in advance. On Friday a special ceremony of the Stations of the Cross is performed. Christ Ashram even celebrates a feast day like Catholic churches in Goa. Its feast day is on May 3. Devotees hire a bus and come en masse to attend.

As an individual enters the enclosed yard through a gate, he must remove his footgear. Christ Ashram is about prayer and penance. There are no medicines. Eugenio is vehemently opposed to doctors and science. Miguel is more practical, knowing he cannot cure all ills (automobile crash victims brought to Christ Ashram were sent to the hospital on Miguel's say-so), but he has faith in his healing powers. All the rituals are a combination of prayer and penance. Devotees are told they must drive out the spirits that possess and torment them by doing penance and by having nothing but faith in their hearts that Jesus will cure them. Miguel, the "intermediary," uses holy water and his special powers to help them as well. After the removal of footgear, Miguel takes a handful of holy water from a blue plastic bucket and splashes it with considerable force into each person's face. A small metal cross is then proffered to be kissed.

The following description is one variety of the daily ritual at Christ Ashram.

One bright morning about 15 to 20 people were in the *pandal* participating in the saying of the litany and the Rosary. Eugenio led the prayers. There was considerable singing. Outside, in the sun, were the penitents, some 30 to 40 strong. They were in three concentric rings. The innermost were mainly women, crawling on all fours around and around the *pandal*. All had pads on their knees to protect them from the rough gravel ground. One or two were using old bras for this purpose. The next ring was for four or five men and youths who rolled in sackcloth around and around the *pandal*. Several of these were possessed and whooped and shrieked in their fits. The outermost ring was of men and women who merely walked barefoot in the gravel around the edge of the enclosure, always in the sun. A few of them had chained or roped ankles and all of them sang with the people in the *pandal*. A man was tied to each of the two heavy crosses, exposed to the sun, the nails sticking into his back. From time to time a woman (more rarely a man) would rush to the central small cross in the *pandal* and prostrate sobbing or gasping over the altar, blowing great puffs of air onto the cross. She might kiss it loudly or shriek and moan with anguished cries. Other people staggered to the same spot and prostrated full length in Hindu fashion to the crucifix behind. Still others would lie face down, full length before the cross, as if passed out. The large, dark wooden cross was also embraced and kissed. People made supplications at the same time, mostly unspoken, faces set in concentration. At times during the prayers there would be a sudden scream or a sudden burst of rapid Konkani, perhaps an inchoate calling out. Miguel moved quietly but expertly among the penitents, dashing a sudden slash of water across someone's face with a sharp sound, pulling exhausted, entranced penitents into the *pandal*, then cooling them down with water, in one case walking a youth around for a moment.

Suddenly a howling youth in a frenzy climbed up the jackfruit tree next to the *pandal* and rang the bell hung there with his teeth. The whole scene is one of noise and even bedlam to a casual observer, but there is certainly an order to it. Underneath it is very controlled. People react in set ways; their behavior and trances are predictable.

Another type of ritual involves Mafalda and her special role. During the second saying of the litany, just after noon, Mafalda, clad in sackcloth, writhed prostrate along the ground, crossed the road, and moved up the hill beyond, which has a red dirt path winding up and down among the trees and bushes. Eugenio had spoken of certain symbolic features associated with the hill—gates and a serpent tree—he had seen visions here and given the three hills names. (see p. 229). Now Mafalda followed the complete circuit, up and down, with the Hindu girl “member” attending her and about twenty male and female devotees behind her. She wore a crown of thorns and made the whole trip on her belly. Returning to the enclosure, she circled the *pandal* several times before entering it to lie prostrate before the altar and cross. She, like all the rolling penitents, had become the colour of the earth itself, both skin and sackcloth.

At 3 pm sharp on Friday the ceremony of the Stations of the Cross began. The whole group of devotees, 100-150 strong, moved from stations 1 through 14 consecutively. A few people remained in the *pandal*, at the back of the crowd, moving slightly to face the correct station each time. First everyone knelt on the red, gravelly ground. At each station a different man held a large crucifix on a stand, flanked by two little boys with candles. Eugenio was at front centre shadowed closely by the Hindu girl in white with her matted hair. She sang along with the others. Eugenio read a separate prayer at each station in his best Church voice. After the prayer, all rose and sang the same hymn then moved to the next station. During each of the 14 repetitions of this ritual, Mafalda, the snake, lay prostrate in front of the held crucifix. After the final station all returned to the *pandal* and a regular prayer session was held. Some people were crying and moaning and there was the whistling, puffing breath, the sharp inhalations and exhalations of a penitent woman who had lain prone for almost 6½ hours by the little altar. The concentric rings of rollers, crawlers, and circlers resumed their penitence. Mafalda was chained very ostentatiously by two women to the thick post with the black and white chains.

A poor Hindu woman, old before her time, clad in a thin sari, whirled about singing some sort of folk song, half dancing in madness. Seriously sick in Western eyes, a lone figure, helpless and

badly nourished. Possessed by devotion, mad for God in one of His many forms? Yes, perhaps.

The devotees of Christ Ashram are engaged in both practical and spiritual activity. That is, while they come to be cured of their troubles, they also find answers to the larger questions of mankind about meaning, life, death, right and wrong. In this way, Christ Ashram is the exact equivalent of a church or temple. It is a religious centre. Fr. de Melo noted that Mafalda's mother did not mind her daughter's being at Nuvem and doing this hard penance every day. She feels her daughter is within the folds of the Church, a feeling Fr. de Melo certainly does not share. In fact, Christ Ashram is syncretic, not only in its ritual and belief structure, but in its very *raison d'être*. Miguel Colaço, the healer, is in direct symbiosis with Hindu magicians or sorcerers called *gari* in Goa. Their witchcraft or *gariponn* is believed to be the source of a vast array of troubles. A toothless old Catholic man from Vasco da Gama explained to me:

"Whole India is full of *gariponn*. There never used to be any in the old days. Not in Goa under Portuguese rule, nor in India under the British. But since these people have left, *gariponn* has become strong. In Goa if someone insults you, you don't answer directly. No one does. Instead, they go to a *gari* and get a spell put on the offender. People put packets on your doorstep—you must drench them in holy water. They put magic in your food—you must drink holy water. Christ Ashram is the only place where spells can be removed. Even evil powers are reformed here."

There are no Catholic *gari*. So anyone, Hindu or Catholic, who has a spell cast or curse placed, must go to a Hindu practitioner. The victims or people who feel they are victims (a curse is not always made clear) can turn to Miguel for help in the atmosphere of Christ Ashram, surrounded by pictures of saints, crucifixes, hymns and rosaries. Hindus too can recognize patterns that are familiar. Given the syncretic nature of Christ Ashram and its neat fit into the Indian religious pattern this is hardly surprising. But I am anticipating myself. I shall return to these points in the conclusion.

Both Hindus and Catholics come to Christ Ashram. (Muslims come as well but as their numbers in Goa are quite small, their role as devotees is minimal). The majority of people at Christ Ashram are Catholic. The two things we want to know most about them are who they are and why they come. The "clientele" or the

“devotees” of Christ Ashram is overwhelmingly lower class. They are poor—small farmers or fishermen, labourers, sailors and their wives. There is a percentage of lower middle class people too, women who do not have the towel-like aprons of the poor labouring women, but simple cotton voile saris and a few gold ornaments. Their husbands are in neat shirts and pants instead of the stained clothing of workers. Even fewer are from the middle class—English speaking accountants, a nurse, a small landowner in sport shirt and sunglasses and a businessman in transport with a gold watch and ring. The devotees are generally from the lower castes as well. The reason why upper class, upper caste people are seldom found (though by no means totally absent) at Christ Ashram has much to do with the fact that such people usually rely on Western or Ayurvedic medicine. Also, Brahmins and Kshatriyas, both Hindu and Catholic, tend to prefer the “transcendental” and “reflective” aspects of religion.

Christ Ashram offers cures to the mentally and physically ill. Miguel is known as a healer and exorcist. There may be considerable skepticism in knowledgeable ecclesiastic and medical circles in Goa as to the efficacy of his powers, but Miguel’s devotees have great faith in them. He can lift spells. Some people believe that his slightly deformed knee—a globular swelling of flesh that hangs loosely—contains a cross that can deflect evil from anyone around him. Miguel’s son said:

“The Church does nothing to help the people that come here. Cases are cured here that are cured nowhere else. People who have a curse put on them can get it removed here. “Uncle” (as even the son calls his father) can take a curse out of you by giving you holy water to drink or he can wash it off the outside using the same holy water.”

Rosie—dark, petite, well-dressed, gold loop earrings and lip-stick—a nurse who speaks good English. She is very enthusiastic about Christ Ashram. Some time ago she had an inflamed leg and foot, so bad she could not walk. It was terribly painful. The doctors told her it was an allergy to her slippers but they could not cure her. She came to Christ Ashram and after some time of prayer and penance she was totally well. There was no mark on either legs or feet.

A thin waiter returned from Saudi Arabia with a hernia. He had come back to have an operation in Bombay but it went wrong because of a curse. Now, at Christ Ashram, he was recovering, he said, at least he could sleep at night.

Ramona, a teenage student from Maharashtra. She speaks excellent English and has a slightly disturbed and intense air. She failed in her exams because of a curse, came to Christ Ashram and got rid of it. She is with her aunt and her cousin, a stunned-looking man in his late 20s who sits despondently under a tree in back of the house, where dogs, crows and chickens squabble over garbage. He once had a girlfriend. He went to Bahrain for a job and she deserted him. She took all his possessions too. Now he will not talk to anybody.

A Hindu man, perhaps 45, who looks healthy but vaguely tired, is in business. Someone put magic in his food and he got terrible swelling of the stomach, a constant pain which eventually effected his mind. Doctors could do nothing. Now he is almost cured. He swears that there's no place in the world like Christ Ashram.

An old seaman, in his 60s, fat, stained undershirt; he works for a well-known company. A curse had been put on him and his family. His parents and three brothers died. Two of the brothers were older than he. His nephews and nieces, wife and sisters-in-law all come to Christ Ashram. He points out at least ten relatives in the crowd. They get great help, get rid of all the evil influences. He says he talks to his elder brothers through a niece who becomes possessed by them.

The old man from Vasco, mentioned above, worked for 32 years in a Bombay radio store but got no pension. He has a son in Bombay and a daughter in Africa who support him. Long ago he had a dream in which he saw a star with a blazing tail, very bright, so bad and terrible. Just after that, in the same dream he saw a beautiful little star with lovely light, so calm. It was interpreted by someone as meaning bad luck followed by peace. So far, he said, he had had 25 years of trouble. And he is over 70. Magic was given to his wife who sickened and died before her time. His parents had also died. His son failed his Matric four times. He is very vehement about the potency of Christ Ashram for getting rid of magic.

Fr. de Melo related another case. A man fell out of a papaya tree when he was picking a fruit and broke his ankle. He felt someone was trying to get at him via spells or magic. He came to Christ Ashram to be cured and stayed several months with no result. Later he repudiated Miguel and Christ Ashram. Behind this series of events was something else. The man was a sailor in a merchant ship and his wife had left him or at least, was unfaithful.

There is no standard fee or payment that each devotee must make to Christ Ashram or to the healer himself. Yet everyone is asked for a donation or is given to understand that it is the expected thing to give one. Miguel has bought land in another village of Salcete district and since he has no other source of income this is ample evidence that money is coming in. It is reasonable to assume that the donations are proof that people feel there is something worthwhile to be had at Christ Ashram.

On the surface, then, Christ Ashram might be seen as a place of healing, exorcism, and hope for people who have no recourse to doctors or no belief in the ability of such doctors. Underneath, though, this religious centre is not just “pragmatic” or practically-oriented. It is very much connected to belief, faith and a feeling that devotion to a divine being can cure the ills of the body and soul. Some people say that souls in purgatory for previous sins possess people, particularly when called upon to do so by *garis*. The possessed people must then do penance until the soul’s sins are paid for. The soul will enter heaven and the possessed person will also be cured. The greater the faith one has in the cult’s central figure—Jesus Christ—the sooner will the possession be removed and the person cured. Miguel is the agent but Faith is the essential and central aspect. Eugenio is full of emotion, full of devotion to Jesus Christ. As he speaks, his eyes burn and his face quivers.

“Jesus Christ is everything. We are nothing. We are symbols of Jesus Christ on earth. We are like him. We have power within us but we can never find it ourselves. Scientists and doctors have searched, but they can never find the real thing. They cannot find it. Only through Jesus can we find it. We must put ourselves in the hands of Jesus Christ. We must ask for *kripya* (‘grace’). I cannot express what I feel, what I want to say. Jesus’ grace is everything. Everything.”

Not everyone’s belief may be at the same level or in the same direction. The lower caste, lower class Catholics and Hindus may

approach Christ Ashram with a number of personal beliefs or interpretations of the symbolism and mythology. The following story, related by a devotee, is an example of another interpretation:

“Two snakes lived by my house. They were very evil and caused me a lot of trouble. They died and now they’ve come here to Christ Ashram. They possess people but through so much prayer and penance they have become partially good. Someday, they too will go to heaven. Meanwhile, now they help people too. Mafalda is a snake. You can see it the way she crawls up and down the hill and around. She is evil, but with penance, now she is working for us here and the snake in her will eventually go to heaven.”

Whatever the style of interpretation, devotees at Christ Ashram understand very well the need for faith. The devotion and emotion on constant display there is enough to tire the most determined observer after a few hours. The intensity is very high. Eugenio once greeted me by saying simply “Faith is all!” It sums up Christ Ashram very well. That is why I chose to put it in the title.

Conclusions

After having described Christ Ashram at some length, the final task of this essay is to put it in the broader framework of Indian religion, for despite its Catholic symbolism that is surely where it belongs.

Webster’s dictionary defines syncretism as

“the developmental process of historical growth within a religion by accretion and coalescence of different and often originally conflicting forms of belief and practice through the interaction with or supersession of other religions.”²⁶

India has a long tradition of syncretic activity. It is not new to point this out, but to examine the nature of Catholic-Hindu syncretism is. Colpe, in his article on syncretism and secularization, notes that “the deepest reason for the susceptibility of Christianity to being syncretized may be the state of suspension in which those pagan elements continue to exist without whose use the Christian message could not have become (established).”²⁷

This comment is extremely relevant to the Goan case. Catholicism was spread by force in the 16th century and many converts never fully understood the new set of meanings their freshly adopted symbols and rituals were meant to convey. Certainly one can speak of a Goan variety of Catholicism that for several centuries

has maintained a complex set of symbolic links to the surrounding Hindu culture.²⁸ Further, one may speak of "Goan religion", a continuum which is recognizably Catholic at one end and "standard" Hindu at the other (if "standard" has any meaning at all). In the middle one finds a mixture of Catholic and Hindu rituals, saintly figures, symbols and beliefs. Before 1961, all religious activities which did not conform to accepted Church practice were frowned on for Catholic Goans. Portuguese rule was undoubtedly Catholic rule, though Hindus were allowed religious freedom and participation in all areas of public life after 1910. Since 1961 there has been a shift, but it is not a well-defined one. The Catholics fell from power, both politically and culturally, though individuals may have kept their positions. There has been an economic upheaval, new urbanization, migration into and out of Goa. It is a time of great change and uncertainty, surely the greatest since the conquests and conversions of the 1500s. Syncretic cults often arise in such situations. The old *bkahti* movements did, especially those of Hindu-Muslim interaction. New styles of traditional belief and practice are created in order to re-establish the proper order of society or to re-interpret the changing world. "What results is sometimes felt even by indigenous people to be an increase in and spread of demonic possession...".²⁹ I refer the reader to the idea expressed by one devotee on p. 233 that *gariponn* increased after the colonial powers left India. Neither Catholicism nor Hinduism is without a long tradition of possession, exorcism and faith healing. For the Hindu aspect of these, we may turn to many of the authors already quoted—Babb, Berreman, Jones and Mandelbaum. In addition one can cite many examples from Hindu literature of gods and sages possessing people through the power acquired by meditation. For the Catholic side, there is the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 9, verses 17-29. It is a time of cultural change and uncertainty in Palestine. A man brings his possessed son to Jesus. The son foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and falls about and has been this way since childhood.

"Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straight away the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Jesus exorcised the "foul spirit" from the boy, who fell down as if

dead. Onlookers thought he was dead but Jesus lifted him up. When Jesus' disciples asked later why they could not exorcise the demon, Jesus replied, and the answer reverberates uncannily in Goa, India in 1979,

"This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

Christ Ashram exists at a time of change and uncertainty. Miguel as a faith healer or exorcist bears a great resemblance not only to Jesus the exorcist (but not Jesus in his wider role) but also to the Hindu shaman. Berreman's description of the role of shamans in Pahari society comes very close to describing Miguel Colaço.

"Shamanism affords people who would otherwise spend their lives deferring to others a role in which they can hope to acquire not only prestige and economic well-being, but a large measure of influence in the lives of others, and especially in the lives of their caste superiors..."³⁰

He sees shamans as socially and economically ambitious people.

"Shamans are ... innovators in the sphere of traditional Pahari religion. Most of their innovations, however, take place within relatively narrow limits. They seek to enhance their own position in the system, but they seek to perpetuate the religious system which validates their role."³¹

This is the very heart of the matter. I am arguing that this religious system which Miguel as shaman seeks to perpetuate is a Goan regional variant of an all-India pattern. He does not try to discredit either Catholic or Hindu tradition. Christ Ashram can be seen as a presentation of a world view. There are both Hindu and Catholic elements, but overall the cult must be seen in the context of Goan society in which a unity of identity and strong similarity of world view underlie an apparent diversity. To demonstrate this claim more fully we can examine Christ Ashram in terms of content and form.

Content at Christ Ashram has two dimensions, that is, people come for basically two things: help and power. If Miguel conducts a special prayer session just for you, to intercede with Jesus on your behalf, then you are getting help. Your problems are diagnosed and a simple remedy is prescribed. Most devotees cannot afford extended medical treatment. They interpret mental illness of most kinds in very different ways from Westerners or Western-educated people. Modern doctors cannot give simple answers which can be understood in a traditional framework. The unsettled times, the

rapid change and the uprooting of many people who are unprepared for it create a need for help—numerous devotees have been in the Middle East, away on ships, or in Bombay's seething turbulence. Christ Ashram is "putting people back together" in a mode they can understand, in a way derived from Goan traditions that makes sense to devotees.

Power comes from being part of something bigger than the daily round. At Christ Ashram one learns the power of Faith and its ability to overcome evil. As Eugenio told me, "We are fighting a Third World War here. It is against Satan." A florid turn of phrase but certainly not indicative of a lack of purpose. In a real sense devotees can gain confidence to face a world in which they are generally powerless. They feel that through Faith and penance they can affect their surroundings and have the power to ward off evil. Perhaps through this "feeling", they actually can. If they are totally devoted and true believers, they are assured that unlimited power to overcome disease and suffering will be theirs. "Knowing" the answer, having unassailable knowledge, can be a source of power.

The content of Christ Ashram's ethos is familiar to anyone who reads or thinks about similar cults, particularly syncretic ones, in Latin America, Africa or Melanesia. In terms of form the syncretism in Christ Ashram assumes a greater importance. There is a duality which combines Hindu and Catholic and the transcendental/textual—pragmatic/non-textual aspects of Indian religion in the one place. This duality is important both in terms of talking about Goan syncretism as well as for linking Christ Ashram to an all-India pattern of religious behaviour.

The duality may be best presented as a chart.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Prayer | 1. Penance |
| 2. Peaceful scenes, people lying down or sitting, calm | 2. Wild scenes, people in violent movement, action, noise |
| 3. Silence or orderly singing | 3. Crying, shrieking, chaos |
| 4. Water being drunk from glasses | 4. Water splashed from a bucket |
| 5. Shade | 5. Sun |

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Eugenio: educated, middle class, higher caste, English, Portuguese | 6. Miguel: illiterate, lower class, lower caste, Konkani only |
| 7. Catholic texts and rituals—hymns, rosary, litany, Stations of the Cross
Catholic symbols—cross, crucifix, saints | 7. Bowing, rolling, prostrating, trance, exorcism, garlands, snake and nature symbols (hills, trees)—a mix of Hindu and folk Catholic rituals, no text. |
| 8. Faith all important | 8. Faith all important |

Interestingly, Eugenio and Miguel reverse their leadership roles at certain key moments in the daily ritual, so that Eugenio is loudly singing and praying as the penitents circle the *pandal* in their various ways while Miguel quietly tends to the over-involved. Then Miguel leads quiet prayers for particular individuals while Eugenio retires. Two disparate strands are joined; two supposedly “separate” religions are welded into a syncretic cult.

Mandelbaum says that “religion ... provides alternate roles for those ill-suited to the roles they have inherited.”³² This is very relevant to the devotees at Christ Ashram who seek a sense of power and try to escape their impotency in the face of change. Such cults have long been a major way of personal transformation or “escape routes” in village India. Indians have traditionally expressed their discontent in this way. The similarity to cults in other areas of the world and the type of people who become devotees bring to mind Douglas’ discussion of “peripheral cults” in *Natural Symbols*. She notes Lewis’ observation that “people who are peripheral to the central focus of power and authority tend to be possessed by spirits who are peripheral to the main pantheon and whose morality is dubious.”³³ She then goes on to say that women, serfs, and slaves, particularly released slaves, are particularly susceptible to religious movements which allow abandonment of control, do not spring from the mainstream of society and so celebrate the experience of being peripheral.³⁴ A large number of devotees at Christ Ashram are peripheral to modern Goan society. At least they may perceive themselves to be so. Similarly, the snake, the nature symbols and exorcism itself are peripheral to both mainstream Catholicism and

Hinduism. However, deprivation and discontent cannot be the total explanation of Christ Ashram's existence; neither should we interpret content and form in purely "pragmatic" terms. Indian religion has always had a variety of forms of expression as was pointed out on p. 222. The eclectic nature of religion in Goa reflects the traditional Hindu or Indian eclecticism very well. If the social and economic statements being made at Christ Ashram have to do with powerlessness and need for help, the cultural aspect is rather different. Throughout India there is a ritual style appropriate to the context of healing and exorcism. Though a Catholic, Miguel is easily recognizable as an Indian shaman and the activities of the devotees on the penance side of the spectrum are familiar to observers of such cults in other parts of India. The style of Christ Ashram expresses the fact that healing and exorcism are taking place in a context which is familiar to and understood by Goan devotees, both Catholic and Hindu. The use of Catholic texts increases prestige and their use shows the desire for status by all involved. Rosary, hymns from Church missals and litany as well as traditional Catholic symbols assure Catholic Goan devotees that their activity is legitimate when in fact the Church disowns Christ Ashram entirely. The mixture of the textual/transcendental with the non-textual/pragmatic is itself very Indian. The overall style belongs to the regional or local religious context, "is found in every locality, and ... falls within a pattern that is probably pan-Indian in distribution."³⁵

The style of ritual behaviour at Christ Ashram is appropriate for low prestige people in an out-of-church or out-of-temple context in Goa. Most devotees would attend services or puja at more "mainstream" religious institutions as well. We can say that the style at Christ Ashram is a "dialect" in a Goan ritual "language". Because of the syncretic nature of Goan culture this dialect is understood by people who in other contexts would be classed as belonging to different religions. A cult such as this is in turn part of the continuing process of syncretism—bringing two once opposed belief systems into a new, mutually intelligible and acceptable one. Further, the Christ Ashram style is part of an all-India ritual "language" which derives strictly from Hindu tradition. Christ Ashram fits squarely into the framework of Indian religion set up

by Babb, Berreman, Mandelbaum and others, particularly into the picture drawn by Babb in *The Divine Hierarchy*. Like Babb, I feel that it is not realistic to try to delineate discrete levels in Indian religion. There are too many exceptions to any rules for one thing and for another, religious style is as expressive and informative as it is pragmatic or functional. As a mode of expression, religious style may adopt elements from any "level" of the whole possible gamut and as a mode of informing participants about the world there is similarly no need to conform to a set pattern. So, as has been said, Christ Ashram is linked to devotion (*bhakti*) as much as to the shamanistic, healing style. Different aspects of style which are used at different occasions for other people in other parts of India and the world, are combined to express the particular things that are meaningful to the Goan devotees at Christ Ashram. Devotion, emotion—a great faith in Jesus—is the underlying base of the cult. Just as in traditional *bhakti* cults, Christ Ashram is for everyone, rich or poor. Devotees are Hindus, Catholics, and Muslims, from many castes. Pocock notes that the villagers he studied in Gujarat had a selective understanding of *bhakti*. "The stress ... upon the renunciation of the fruits of action tends to be lost to sight."³⁶ At Christ Ashram, *bhakti* or Faith is combined with pragmatic objectives and there are two styles, devotional and shamanistic, combined as well. Pocock continues by saying that "the lowest common denominator of the beliefs about *bhakti* ... combines emotion with a lack of ethical or social restraint."³⁷ This is similar to what we can conclude about Christ Ashram. It is a modern, syncretic version of a *bhakti* or devotional cult. Faith is literally all. It is the basic element, the motivating factor for everything else. Yet there are other elements of the multifaceted Indian religious style present too. Christ Ashram mixes texts, exorcism, trance, conventional and innovative symbolism, traditional and new mythology, devotion, emotion, and a syncretic world view into a uniquely Goan version of a very ancient tradition. Jesus Christ as a focus of devotion and a hope for healing in the context of Christ Ashram can be seen even in terms of a world-wide ritual language which has spoken to people in many times and many places of similar things. Ancient Palestine, the various centres of medieval Europe, Lourdes, modern Brazil and Haiti, and closer to Goa—the shrine of Our Lady of Good Health

at Vailankanni, Tamilnadu, Kataragama in Sri Lanka, and the temples of Balaji and Ram Devra in Rajasthan. Each of these may have certain unique aspects, certain separate historical traditions, but all express human emotions in a complex language of faith and ritual, a language that we are only beginning to comprehend.

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² de Bary, W. T. ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition Vol. 1*, Columbia Univ., N.Y., 1958, p. 354.

³ See Zelliot, 1976 for fuller treatment of these things.

⁴ Communication from Dr. G. Bailey, La Trobe University, May, 1981.

⁵ Pocock, D. F., *Mind, Body and Wealth*, Basil Blackwell, 1973, p. 100.

⁶ Redfield, Robert, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1956.

⁷ Srinivas, M. N., *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1952.

⁸ Babb, Lawrence A., *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in Central India*, Columbia Univ., 1975, pp. 25-26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰ Mandelbaum, David G., "Transcendental and Pragmatic Aspects of Religion", *American Anthropologist*, 68, 1966.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1175.

¹² *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1176.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1175-1176.

¹⁵ Berreman, Gerald D., "Brahmins and Shamans in Pahari Religion" in *Religion in South Asia*, ed. Edward By Harper, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, 1964.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁷ Mandelbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 1176.

¹⁸ Jones, Rex L., "Shamanism in South Asia: A Preliminary Survey", *History of Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 4, May 1968.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

²⁰ Babb, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²² Newman, Robert S., "Zatras and Feast Days: Syncretic Social Dramas in Modern Goa", forthcoming in the *Boletim do Instituto Menezes Braganca*, Panjim, Goa.

²³ Goa is unofficially divided into two unequal halves — the Novas Conquistas (New Conquests), large in area but smaller in population, with fewer Catholics, most of the iron ore, and far less economic development and material prosperity, and the Velhas Conquistas (Old Conquests), smaller in area, with larger population, many more Catholics because of longer and harsher Portuguese rule, and with most of the material prosperity, all the large towns, and Portuguese historical monuments. Salcete has the highest proportion of Catholics of any of Goa's eleven districts, the only one to have a substantial Catholic majority.

²⁴ Narayan, Lakshmi, "Holy Water and Penance", *Femina*, Oct. 8-22, 1978, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

²⁶ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam and Co., Springfield, Mass., 1967, p. 2319.

²⁷ Colpe, Carsten. "Syncretism and Secularization: Complementary and Antithetical Trends in New Religious Movements?", *History of Religions*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Nov. 1977, p. 161.

²⁸ See Newman, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Colpe, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

³⁰ Berreman, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³² Mandelbaum, David G., *Society in India: Change and Continuity Vol. 2*, University of California, Berkeley, 1972, p. 256.

³³ Douglas, Mary. *Natural Symbols*, Vintage, N.Y., 1973, p. 116.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

³⁵ Babb, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

³⁶ Pocock, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

BOOK REVIEWS

AYOUB, MAHMOUD, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism* — The Hague-Paris-New York, Mouton, 1978, pp. 299. DM 64.—.

The formative centuries of Islam were “of temporal as well as spiritual achievement.... The success was comprehensive as well as striking.... the enterprise gained not only power but greatness.... The Muslim achievement was seen as intrinsic to their faith”. This characterisation of Islam, as given by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, is undoubtedly accurate. One of its corollaries is that defeat, humiliation and suffering are not easily coped with by Islam (or by any other religion for that matter), but that for Islam they also present an especially disconcerting theological problem (as events in the Middle East have illustrated once again in the last decades). For a Christian, at least for a non-triumphalist one, a persecuted Christianity may symbolise a return to the realities of the genuine, original, early, pre-Constantine Church. For Muslims it is a major problem. The manner in which the “Christian” theme of suffering has surfaced in recent Islamic thought would require a special study. But it is surely no accident that the founder of the Ba‘ath Party, the Arab nationalist ideologist Michel Aflaq (a secularist but of Christian origin) added to the main ingredients of mystical nationalism which he took over from Zaki al-Arsuzi also the elements of “suffering”, “love” and “pain”, or that one of the most tireless and sensitive interpreters of Islam to Christian readers, Bishop Kenneth Cragg, saw fit to translate into English Kamel Hussein’s novel on the Crucifixion *City of Wrong* (“A Friday in Jerusalem”). It is needless to add, however, that Sunni and Shi‘ite attitudes on the subject differ very widely, and that the themes of suffering and martyrdom could acquire a centrality in Shi‘ite piety and devotion that would be unthinkable in Sunnism. “Passion Plays” about Hasan and Husain are very numerous and also well-known, through translations, in the West.

Dr Mahmoud Ayoub’s study (originally a Ph.D. thesis)—published by Mouton as no. 10 in their series “Religion and Society”—attempts to trace the devotional aspects of the sharing in the suffering of the Holy Family (the *Ahl al-Bayt*), and more especially the Muharram rites, back to pre- viz. non-Iranian (or at any rate pre-Safawid) developments of Muslim popular piety. Though his study carefully analyses theological texts and doctrines, the author rightly feels that popular piety is more rele-

vant to his theme than formal theology. He is also convinced that the theological and devotional complex built around the ideas of the *Bayt al-Ahzan* (the "House of Sorrows"), and of the value of participating in this redemptive suffering and thereby appropriating its merits, constitutes an important and religiously significant, though much neglected, dimension of Shi'ite Islam. In the Shi'ite context the whole subject is, of course, closely related to the doctrine of the Imamate and of the role of the *mahdi* as the final avenger. And surely the vengeance he wreaks will be commensurate with the terrible sufferings of the Holy Family, inflated to almost cosmic dimensions by the steady accumulation of theological interpretations, passion plays, diverse forms of dirges and lamentation poetry, popular rituals, and the meritorious qualities ascribed to sharing "the sigh of the sorrowful" and to weeping for Husayn's martyrdom and passion. Dr Ayoub's work, whilst far from being the definitive study of the subject that the historian of religion would like to see, certainly has the merit of posing the problem and collecting a considerable amount of the relevant material.

RJZW

BECHERT, HEINZ, (Herausgeber), *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries*, Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung 1, Report on a Symposium in Göttingen = Abhandlungen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, III, Nr. 108 — Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978, 341 p.

This is an excellent collection of essays on the religion in Buddhist and Buddhist-influenced nations of South and Southeast Asia. In spite of the high quality of the individual essays, the volume faces the problem that has bedeviled many a symposium, namely, the lack of a coherent form or theme. The title of the book as well as the avowed intentions of the editor would lead one to expect a volume on the "rather comprehensive documentation of religious syncretism in the Buddhist world." Several of the essays hardly touch this issue, particularly those in Section I on Buddhist literature in Ceylon. There is a fine definitive article by K.-R. Norman on "The Role of Pāli in Early Sinhalese Buddhism," a more scholastic and philologically oriented article by Oskar Von Hinuber on "The Tradition of Pāli Texts in India, Ceylon and Burma," an attempt by Aloysius Perera to identify the great Buddhist commentator Dhamapāla (among several by that name) and assign a date for his writing, and Richard Gombrich's study of a Sinhala cloth painting of the Vessan-

tara Jātaka from the middle of the eighteenth century. While all of these works are of high quality, intrinsically interesting, and of importance to Buddhist scholars, they tell us very little about religious syncretism or about popular traditions in Sri Lanka or anywhere else.

The next two sections on Buddhism and Society in Sri Lanka and on a comparative view of syncretism in Buddhist countries deal explicitly with the goals of the symposium. Bardwell L. Smith has a sensitive interpretation of the legitimation of power and authority in the ancient (Anuradhapura) period of Sri Lanka. He shows quite convincingly how the Sinhalese adapted two Indian models of kinship and authority—the explicitly Buddhist Asokan model and the less explicit and more selective ideas from the Hindu tradition, specially ideas of divine kinship. Though much of this has been recently discussed by Tambiah (1978) in great detail, Bardwell Smith has nevertheless some interesting things to say about the legitimation of society and polity in Buddhist terms. Specially interesting is his discussion of the manner in which Sri Lanka came to be perceived as a Buddhist nation: the symbolism of relics which imply the “devotional transplanting of the dhamma,” and the immanent presence of the Buddha in the island and in the universe. However, I am not sure whether his view that the *stupa* was not only a repository of relics but a symbol of the cosmos is warranted. This Eliade type of interpretation is certainly very attractive but one needs the evidence of indigenous exegeses and commentaries to justify this assertion. On the other hand, his analysis of the sculpture of the later Anurudhapura and Pollonaruva periods where the Buddha is depicted on the sacred seat of Brahma is a good example of the transformation of the Buddha into a divinity. Yet Bardwell Smith shows that in spite of Mahayāna and Hindu influences the spirit of Sri Lankan Buddhism is essentially Theravāda.

It is difficult to do justice to this essay in a short review, but I find his discussion of the dialectical relationship between Sangha and King especially interesting. This dialectic revolves on the problem of power. As an institutionalized order, Buddhist monks often tended to become world involved and occasionally politically active. But the purity of the order was an essential value in Theravada society; hence the continual “purifications” of the Sangha by the King (which occasionally became a front for persecution and pillage of monastic property). The monks, on the other hand, were guardians of Buddhism, and Buddhist notions of kingship, which *ipso facto* led them into periodic conflicts with kingly authority. Bardwell Smith examines this dialectic in great detail in relation to the overarching values of a Buddhist society.

Editor Bechert's own paper on "The popular religion of the Sinhalese" is a fine historical review of Sinhala religion. The author eschews fashionable "structural models" since he believes (I think rightly) that these models have not helped us to understand the complexities of the Buddhist system. For example, scholars have noted an opposition between the mundane nature of the cults of divinities and the supramundane nature of Buddhism (or one of material and ideal interests) but Bechert shows that this dichotomy is overridden in very important ways, for example, in the Buddhist (doctrinally based) notion of text recitals for prophylactic purposes and other essentially "Buddhist" practices. Much of the information contained in Bechert's essay is well known to Buddhist scholars but he has put it together in a coherent historical framework and in a logically consistent manner. He shows how Hindu beliefs and Sanskritic ideas constantly entered into Buddhism, but they were accepted in Sri Lanka (and in other Theravada societies) in a uniquely Buddhist manner without affecting "the theory and practice of Buddhism itself" (p. 224). When such ideas tend to threaten the integrity of Sinhala-Buddhism they are rejected—witness the rejection of the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata in Sri Lanka. However, Bechert does not tell us why these epics were accepted by *other* Theravada countries like Burma and Thailand. He also informs us that the reformist Buddhist "sects" (Amarapura and Rāmanna Nikāyas) introduced into Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century did not allow shrines for the gods in their temples, but he does not tell us how long this intellectual stance lasted. My own investigations show that in the early twentieth century many of these reformist sects adopted gods and other aspects of popular religion into the Buddhist temple complex.

The two central papers are those by Smith and Bechert; the others are also nevertheless of considerable interest. Reynolds has a well-written, crisp account of the religious situation of elites in early British times and shows the failure of the missions in converting Buddhists. The information and analysis are not new, however, and a more detailed account of this period is available in Malalgoda (1976). Jacob Ensink has a fascinating essay on the singular kind of syncretism in medieval Java and Bali and continuing into presentday Bali—the coexistence of the Buddha and Śiva cults with their respective priests and rituals. These were parallel religions, yet on another deeper doctrinal level they showed a remarkable isomorphism. The two religions apparently got on well together, and laymen did not see any differences in doctrine between them.

I regret that I do not read German and cannot comment on the papers written in that language: Buddhist syncretism in Nepal by Lienhard, in

Japan by Hienemann, the account of Buddhist modernism by Sankisyanz, the Buddhist *paritta* in Sri Lanka by Peter Schalk, and the ethnographic study of the Kataragama cult in Sri Lanka by Klaus Hausherr. I managed to get a translation made of the last article and it seems to be the best ethnographic description of this important cult yet to appear in print.

To sum up: this is an extremely important collection of essays on Buddhism, but our knowledge of Buddhist syncretism is in no way advanced by this book. As the editor himself realizes, one does not even have a set of terms to describe the interesting phenomena of a religion constituted of belief systems coming from different historical periods and cultural backgrounds and integrated through time into a framework which remains essentially Buddhist. Even the vague term "syncretism" is a label that illustrates our theoretical incompetence.

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DRIJVERS, H. J. W., *The Religion of Palmyra* (Iconography of Religions XV, 15) — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976, xii + 37 p. + 80 Plates.

TEIXIDOR, JAVIER, *The Pantheon of Palmyra* — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1979, xix + 137 p. + 35 plates and map.

DRIJVERS, H. J. W., *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1980, xxx + 204 p. + 34 plates.

The student of Near Eastern religions in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (excluding Judaism and Christianity) is faced with a paucity of literary sources. There can be no doubt that in Mesopotamia proper and adjacent areas the Assyro-Babylonian cult and beliefs lived on, albeit in Aramaic dress, but even here the classical texts were copied right up into the Seleucid period in Akkadian. There is no indication of change or evolution in religious thought or practice. Berossus is a source for the past rather than an indication of the present. It is only from stray references in the Babylonian Talmud, Syriac writers and the Mandaic corpus that the afterlife of Assyro-Babylonian religion can be traced. The magic bowls—Jewish, Christian and Mandaic are also indicative of this trend. By this period one must also be on the lookout for possible Iranian influences and for the Iranian-Semitic syncretism that some have proposed. Curiously enough we have few epigraphical or archaeological finds in Mesopotamia proper that could serve in the study of the local religions in the periods mentioned above. This is due to a variety of reasons one of which may have been the fanaticism of the Zoroastrian clergy during the Sassanian

period. The variety of religious groups in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the Sasanian period is attested to by the recently published Cologne Mani codex with its information about the presence of Elkasites there and by the very rise of Mani in that region.

When we turn westward—and we must include Assur, Hatra, Dura Europos, Palmyra and Edessa—we must rely almost entirely on archaeological finds, epigraphic and iconographic. True, there are literary sources: remarks and asides in various Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine writers (including a famous oration of Julian), the *De Syria Dea* of Lucian, and some descriptive and polemic passages in various Syriac writers, but these are rarely explicit and require interpretation and elucidation. Here too we are dealing with important inland cities that served as emporia and caravan cities. They bore both Aramaic and Hellenistic heritages and were open to influence from the Arab tribes that inhabited the steppes between the cities and who had over the centuries become sedentarized and settled in these cities. About these Arabs and their beliefs our information is even slighter. The reader will have noted that the great coastal cities Tyre, Sidon, Latakia, Beirut, Jaffa, Ascalon, Gaza or the cities of Palestine have not been mentioned. The reason is that the external hellenisation of these cities was so strong that except for the meagre information to be extracted from scant literary references and from coinage little is known. The iconography of the *dea syria* Artagatis is better known from other sites than from Hieropolis, the center of her worship.

The study of the religions of this area has received renewed impetus in recent years from both a revived interest in late antiquity and from important archaeological discoveries. When this reviewer began his studies of Palmyrene texts with H. Ingholt about thirty years ago the field was dormant. However, recent excavations at Palmyra, at Hatra, and the discovery of interesting mosaics and inscriptions at Urfa (Edessa), the series of important articles on various aspects of Syrian antiquities and archaeology by the late Daniel Schlumberger and Henri Seyrig, and the renewed publication of pertinent Syriac texts have elicited important contributions to the subject. Alongside of J. T. Milik, J. B. Segal and J. Starcky the authors of the books under review have been among the most prominent workers in this field. Hans Drijvers' study of Bardaisan, his edition of a corpus of Old Syriac inscriptions and his many articles and similarly Javier Teixidor's *The Pagan God* (Princeton, 1977) and his useful *Bulletin d'épigraphie sémitique* (in *Syria*) have advanced our knowledge considerably. Drijvers' study of the iconography of the *Religion of Palmyra* presents a concise survey of the history of the site, of previous research on the subject and of the art of Palmyra, but the bulk of the fascicle is devoted

to a well illustrated (80 plates) "religion in Palmyra according to its sculptural monuments" (pp. 9-22). He includes the Palmyrène and the villages between Palmyra and Homs (Emessa) in his survey. The name of the chapter is accurate, for the *tesserae* are excluded from the study, because as Drijvers states, the symbolism of the *tesserae* is still moot, "symbols in general are perfectly clear, if only the cultural and religious framework in which they function is known, and that is the real problem with Palmyra" (p. 6).

This is the problem neatly stated, for the lack of this framework and any literary information makes interpretation of even the more explicit sculptural remains, often accompanied by inscriptions in Palmyrene or Greek, or both, difficult. Yet it would have been useful to give those *tesserae* whose meaning is clear enough. For instance, the *tesserae* (*Recueil des tessères de Palmyre* 218, 219) on which the names *blty* (my lady, a form of Astarte) is associated with that of Tammuz, or the *tessera* (*RTP* 342) which shows a body on a funeral bed with *tmwz*³ (Tammuz) below on the obverse and a mourning woman, beating her bare breasts on the reverse (cf. O. Eissfeldt, *Adonis und Adonaj*, Berlin, 1970, p. 22 and plates ix-x). The *tesserae* could also be used for illustrating other religious practices. This *caveat* aside Drijvers presents us with a clear description of the sculptural finds in their archaeological context and an interpretation of the religious iconography that is plausible. He is also cognizant of the varied strands that made up Palmyrene religion—the Aramaean (West Semitic), the Mesopotamian and the 'Arab'. He is surely right in seeing the dedication date of the Temple of Bel on the 6th of Nisan as being related to the Babylonian Akitu festival and I would not be as hesitant as he is (p. 11) in taking the scene on the relief found in that temple (pl. 1v, 2) as representing the battle of Bel-Marduk with Tiamat. I cannot, however, agree with him that the name Bel is an *interpretatio babyloniaca* of a native god Bol (< Ba'al). The region was, as noted, a conglomerate of religious influences and Tadmor was part of the Mesopotamian culture zone for over two millennia. As we have just seen, Tammuz rather than Adonis was mourned.

Teixidor's *The Pantheon of Palmyra* deals with a) the cult of the supreme god; b) the cult of the sun and the moon at Palmyra; c) The goddess of Palmyra and her associates; d) tutelary deities; e) oriental deities; and f) the anonymous god. The study is thorough in its use of both the epigraphic and iconographic material. Although it is more selectively illustrated than the foregoing work, it contains useful aerial views, maps and plans. The author, as stated in the preface, is well aware of the limitations set by the lack of literary sources, but he has made excellent use of the

many ritual, honorific and religious inscriptions and funerary texts in describing the gods of Palmyra and its environs and their place in the local pantheon. One aspect of his approach should be mentioned, the view that there is a pervasive Phoenician influence on Palmyrene religion. Although the author makes some important points in this direction, and the idea is plausible, he is not always convincing. Thus his discussion (p. 5) of *Samabolo* as an equivalent of *šm bʿl* (this epithet of Ashtart is known from Sidon, not Tyre) is not acceptable, neither is his endorsement of Milik's strange view that the enigmatic name of the goddess *bʿltk* "originated in a liturgical invocation addressed to Bel" (p. 57). The discussion of the various gods and their iconography is especially important in the chapters on the goddess and her associates, and on the tutelary deities and the oriental deities. This is the most detailed discussion to appear, and the author makes use of a wide range of materials although such works as Ibn al-Kalbi's *Book of the Idols* and other Arabic sources have been neglected. There are many points with which one could disagree with Teixidor; in the view of this reviewer he agrees too readily with a host of suggestions by J. T. Milik. There are also differences of opinions between Teixidor and Drijvers as to the interpretation of various inscriptions and the identification of certain Gods. Drijvers (p. 15) is of the opinion that the 'anonymous god' to whom a great number of altars were dedicated was an aspect of Ba'alshamen (p. 15) while Teixidor (pp. 115-119) believed that it was the sun-god Yarhibol. The student of Palmyrene religion now has an excellent tool for his studies.

Edessa, the 'blessed city' was the subject of an encompassing work by J. B. Segal (Oxford, 1970) in which many aspects of religion were taken up. Drijvers' book is a discussion of the cults and beliefs of that city before it became the cultural center of Syrian Christianity. After a short survey of the city's history he gives us a detailed discussion of the sources for the study of Edessa's religion. Drijvers goes on to discuss the cult of Nebo and Bel; the cult of Atargatis; the cult of Sin, lord of the gods at Sumatar Harabesi; and the cult of Azizos and Monimos and other Arab deities. The last chapter deals with Edessan religion, paganism in the Roman empire and early Christianity. Literary, epigraphic, iconographic and numismatic sources are carefully and scrupulously examined, and the views of earlier scholars on the subject critically considered. Since the sources about some of these deities at Edessa are limited, Drijvers examines related materials from Palmyra, Hatra, Hierapolis and many other sites. Thus in the treatment of Atargatis, her role and that of her consort Hadaran, known primarily from coins from Hierapolis, are given the most detailed study known to me. Since various 'Arab' deities are

discussed in this work there is a great deal of overlap with Teixidor's study in the Palmyra volume, and here too there is, as was to be expected, some disagreement. Two important viewpoints of Drijvers are worth noting: 1) that there is little more than isolated evidence for Iranian religious influence in Syria and Mesopotamia; and 2) scepticism about the triads of gods that are often found or devised by scholars for Syria and Mesopotamia in this period. He notes that at Edessa none of this can be detected (pp. 178-9). The first viewpoint is open to discussion and this reviewer hopes to come back to it at a later date.

An important result of this study is the need to pay more attention to the reports found in the literature of the period—be it Syriac, Mandaic or Talmudic—concerning pagan practices. The reviewer deals e.g., with a Mandaic remark about the pagan sanctuaries in the forthcoming Franz Rosenthal Festschrift. Drijvers shows that the passages in the *Doctrine of Addai* about the cults and beliefs of Edessa must be taken seriously. He also demonstrates that during this period religious life in these cities was complex and composite with gods of Mesopotamian, West Semitic and 'Arab' origin worshiped side by side at Edessa. It is best to close this review with his words (p. 177): "The divine population of the temples reflects the sociological structure of the city ...and mirrors the enormous intermingling that characterizes the Syrian and Mesopotamian areas particularly in Greco-Roman times".

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Die Gnosis (Bibliothek der Alten Welt) — Zürich-München, Artemis-Verlag, 3 volumes, 1969-1980.

Gnosticism is "in", and every student of religion, even if he does not master Greek, let alone Coptic, Mandaean, Soghdian and assorted other languages, wants to learn more about this fascinating movement and to read its literature(s). For many decades the non-specialists and especially undergraduate students had to live on anthologies in translation. Unfortunately these were usually inadequate and insufficient. The prestigious Artemis-Verlag in Zurich radically changed this situation by publishing three volumes in its series "Antike und Christentum" (which, in its turn, is part of the series "Bibliothek der Alten Welt"). These volumes are now the indispensable *vademecum* for every reader of gnostic literature.

Vol. 1, containing the "Testimonies of the Church Fathers" (for a long time our only source concerning things gnostic) was translated by W.

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Foerster with the collaboration of E. Haenchen and M. Krause. First published in 1969, a second ed. was brought out in 1979 (pp. 488; Sw.Fr. 48.—).

Vol. 2 (1971) contains the Coptic and Mandaean sources, arranged partly by giving the main Coptic (Nag Hammadi) texts and partly thematically: Mandaean cosmology, soteriology, ethics, cult etc. The volume, edited by W. Foerster, was translated and annotated by M. Krause and K. Rudolph (pp. 500; Sw.Fr. 58.—).

With the publication of vol. 3, *Der Manichäismus* (1980), this splendid undertaking has been completed. The Manichaean texts (including Turfan and the Cologne papyrus) have been translated and annotated by A. Böhlig with the collaboration of J. P. Asmussen (pp. 462; Sw.Fr. 58.—); see already Wolf B. Oerter's *Nachschrift* on pp. 70-71 of this volume. This is a series which cannot be reviewed but only recommended, not least for the excellent introductions to each part and for the superb indices. This anthology has superseded all previous ones in range, quality and usefulness.

With the publication of the first volume it immediately became obvious that instead of trying to do the impossible i.e., to produce equally good anthologies in other languages, one had better translate the Artemis-Verlag volumes. In the English-speaking world, where German is almost an even more esoteric language than Soghdian, the need for an English translation was promptly realised and the first two volumes soon became available also in English. It is to be hoped and expected that the third volume too will be published *anglice* before long.

RJZW

KEEL, OTHMAR, *Das Böcklein in der Milch seiner Mutter und Verwandtes, im Lichte eines altorientalischen Bildmotivs* (Series "Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis" no. 33) — Freiburg, Schweiz, Universitätsverlag, 1980, pp. 166; Sw.Fr. 33.—.

The prohibition "thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk", repeated three times in the Pentateuch (Ex. 23:19, 34:26; Dt. 14:21) has kept learned pens busy over the centuries. Why three times? And to what kind of animals (she-goats and their kids only?) does the prohibition refer? And what does it signify? As is well known, the rabbinic interpretation of this threefold prohibition extends its scope so much that to this day an observant orthodox Jewish household is characterised by two complete sets of crockery, cutlery and kitchen utensils: one for dairy (milk) products and

one for meat products. Contamination of one by the other would make everything unusable. The average Hindu, unlike the average Westerner, would probably immediately understand the difference between milk—although ultimately it too is an animal product—and animal meat. But biblical scholars, not being as a rule Indian, had difficulties. The explanations advanced for this curious prohibition ranged from “genocide” (i.e., the killing together of the mother-animal and her kid viz. calf symbolises the destruction of a species i.e., of God’s created order “each according to its kind”) to the cultic (alleging unproven “Canaanite” viz. other pagan rites involving sacrifices of this type) to the “humanitarian”. The humanitarian explanation, rejected for a long time, has been resurrected in 1979 by M. Haran; Dr. Keel merely mentions this article without, however, discussing Haran’s arguments. The author’s conclusion is very much in the line of what beyond the European continent is often regarded as the “romantic” school of German ethnology: the suckling mother-animal symbolises the divine benevolence dispensing life, fertility, growth, blessing and tenderness on Creation, and should therefore not rudely be tampered with (at least on the temporary symbolic level).

The reader, even the romantic one, will have to judge for himself whether this sounds convincing. It is a pity that the author did not refer to one of the most interesting and challenging attempts at a (structuralist) interpretation of the prohibition, advanced by Jean Soler in his brilliant article “Sémiotique de la nourriture dans la Bible” in *ANNALES* vol. 28, 1973, pp. 943-955. It should be added that no matter what our views are regarding Dr Keel’s proposed interpretation, the book is also extremely valuable for its wealth of plates and drawings. As the subtitle (*im Lichte eines altorientalischen Bildmotivs*) indicates, the author was at pains to bring together a large collection of mother-and-kid/calf images from a diversity of ancient near-eastern sources. These greatly enhance the value of his study even when their immediate relevance to the subject can be considered doubtful.

RJZW

LANCZKOWSKI, GÜNTER, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* (Rw), Reihe: Die Theologie — Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980, 116 p.

Da ein ausgesprochener Mangel an sachgerechten Einführungen in eine immer noch recht unbekannte Wissenschaft herrscht, wird das kleine Buch des Heidelberger Religionswissenschaftlers G. Lanczkowski sicher

dankbar aufgenommen, denn es behandelt auf knappem Raum fast alle wichtigen Gesichtspunkte unserer Disziplin, — wenngleich z. T. einseitige Akzente und gelegentlich recht subjektive Vorgaben zu beobachten sind.

Die Gliederung beginnt mit der Aktualität der Rw; es folgt ein Abschnitt über die "Objekte der Religionsforschung", der sich später mit "Forschungsaufgaben" fortsetzt. Schließlich werden die Teildisziplinen der Rw kurz beleuchtet und die von jeher problematischen Beziehungen der Rw zu Theologie und Philosophie angeschnitten. Auch die Religionskritik kommt noch kurz zu Wort. Den Abschluß bildet ein Überblick über Organisation und Kongresse und "Rw als akademisches Fach".

Der vorgegebene Umfang der kleinen Einführungsbände des Verlages verlangt eine straffe und konzentrierte Durchführung der *wesentlichen* Themen, unter Berücksichtigung aller bedeutenden Schulen und Richtungen. Diesem Erfordernis wird leider nur unzureichend Rechnung getragen; Mythos, Symbolik, Geschichte und Methodik der Wissenschaft kommen z. B. zu kurz.

Recht schön ist die ausführliche Begründung der Religionsforschung mit der zunehmenden Begegnung der Religionen, deren wechselseitige Kenntnis trotz des Diktums von J. Burckhardt von 1868, daß "das Totalbild der Menschheit" nun erreicht sei, noch immer recht mangelhaft ist. Selbst im Westen erscheint die Unkenntnis über fremde Religionen in der Tat erschreckend. Mit Recht heißt es, Weltorientierung setze Sachverständnis voraus (6), und das vor allem im Hinblick auf die "pluralistische Erfahrung" (9). "Neue Religionen" tauchen auf und verlangen eine angemessene methodische Zuwendung. — Trotzdem: die "aktuelle Bedeutung der Rw" darf nicht *allein* die Notwendigkeit rw'licher Forschung begründen. Die Begründung des Faches beruht auf seiner bleibenden Zielsetzung im Rahmen der Geisteswissenschaften (humanities).

Einige grundlegende Überlegungen widmet L. dem Religionsbegriff unter der etwas verwirrenden Rubrik "Objekte der Religionsforschung". Er plädiert für ein umgreifendes Religionsverständnis, das erst die "Eigenständigkeit der Rw" ermöglicht. Natürlich sind Allgemeinbegriffe fragwürdig, weil "leer". Die Vielfalt kann aber dennoch durch die "Frage nach den konstituierenden Faktoren eines Allgemeinbegriffs" (23), der empirisch zu gewinnen ist, bewältigt werden. Es kann im Hinblick auf die heute ebenso modischen wie scheinbar plausiblen Reduktionstheorien nicht nachdrücklich genug betont werden, daß Religion "ein unableitbares Urphänomen" (23) ist, wie immer man diese anthropologische Gegebenheit auch begrifflich fassen mag. Daß ein *universaler* Religionsbegriff (falls es ihn gibt?) aber durch "das Heilige" wieder in Frage gestellt wird, möchte ich bezweifeln, so umstritten der Söderblom/Otto'sche Begriff

heute auch sein mag. Jedenfalls kann die "Göttlichkeit als zentrales Element der Religion" (24) höchstens für eine "Einführung" hinreichend legitimiert sein, — für weitergehende Fragen nach den Grundlagen der Religion reicht sie nicht aus. Dafür wäre vor allem die "radikale" Religionskritik als vorantreibendes Ferment ernst zu nehmen und nicht mit dem Diktum beiseitezuschieben, die "Rw habe damit überhaupt nichts zu tun" (73). — Die Abgrenzung zur Magie wird klar vollzogen, ist jedoch noch kürzlich nicht unwidersprochen geblieben (vergl. H. Biezais). — Problematisch wird L.'s einschränkende Transzendenzbetonung bei der Behandlung der "Weltfrömmigkeit", die wegen "ihrer Diesseitsverbundenheit von jeder Religion verschieden" sei (27). Mit "Erlebnisimmanentismus" ist dieses Phänomen nicht abzutun; sowohl eine "intentionale Sakralisierung des Profanen" wie auch das korrelierte Phänomen der Säkularisierung (wird bedauerlicherweise nicht angesprochen) liegen keineswegs außerhalb des für die Rw relevanten Objekt-Bereichs. L. macht sich die Abwehr von "pseudoreligiösen Erscheinungen" zu einfach. Das beabsichtigte universale Religionsverständnis müßte dann auch konsequent sein.

Zu den Erscheinungen, die überall vorkommen und gern zu Einzeluntersuchungen anregen, auch eine vergl. Typologie herausfordern, gehören die Themen, die bei L. unter "Religionsinterner Pluralismus" und "Interreligiöse Strömungen" abgehandelt werden. Diese beiden Begriffe scheinen mir etwas konstruiert zu sein, zumal sich die angeführten Beispiele leicht ganz anders zuordnen ließen. Inhaltlich jedoch gibt die anschauliche und lebendige Schilderung des Verfassers für den Leser einen guten Einblick in die Fragen und Aufgaben der Rw.

Unter den *Teildisziplinen* der Rw nimmt die Religionsgeschichte für den Verf. zu recht eine zentrale Stellung ein. Sie ist unabweisbar die solide Basis der gesamten Religionsforschung, auf deren historisch-philologische Quellenarbeit alle weiteren Studien erst aufbauen können. Nachdrücklich hebt L. die Bedeutung der Sprache als geistiges Medium "zur tieferen Erfassung religiöser Bereiche" (40) hervor. Weltverständnis werde vornehmlich durch die Sprache vermittelt. Daher sei auch die Philologie das notwendige Instrument des Religionshistorikers. Dem kann nur zugestimmt werden. Wenn Religion nach L. der zentrale Faktor der Kulturen ist, der die Beachtung und Integration anderer Fächer (z.B. Ethnologie, Archäologie, Kunstgesch.) für ein ausgewogenes Forschungsergebnis dringend erfordert, sollten auch diesbezügliche Kenntnisse des Forschers vorliegen. Das gilt auch für die Philologien. Das ist natürlich nur begrenzt möglich; daher sind die Nachbarwissenschaften auf gegenseitige Hilfestellungen angewiesen. — Der Hinweis auf das für die Rw be-

sonders wichtige und schwierige "Verstehen" fällt leider reichlich kurz aus (45).

Ebenso erfreulich liest sich die knappe Darstellung der Religionsphänomenologie. Der generellen Zustimmung zu dieser überzeugenden Hinführung mit der letzten Zielsetzung einer vergleichenden "Wesenserfassung" (heute umstritten!) sollte man aber als kritische Anmerkung noch hinzufügen, daß eine Unterscheidung von Manifestation(göttlich) und Realisation(menschlich) des Sakralen für ein methodisch sauberes Verfahren nicht angeht: Die Einsetzung des japanischen Inselherrschers durch die Sonnengöttin Amaterasu (48) mit der Übergabe der "drei Reichskleinodien" gilt religionspsychologisch lediglich als mythisches Bild für die vorzufundene sakrale Wertigkeit der Kleinodien. Der Mensch *erlebt* und *glaubt* diese Bedeutsamkeit als göttliche Setzung — dank der urzeitlichen Bildung eines aitiologischen Mythos'. Amaterasu *hat* den Kaiser nicht eingesetzt und die Insignien gestiftet. "Manifestation" ist kein feststellbarer Akt, sondern gültige und folgenreiche Bedeutsamkeit für das religiöse Bewußtsein.

Religionstypologie ist m.E. kein eigener Wissenschaftszweig, denn ihr kommt nur ein bedingter Erkenntniswert zwischen dem Allgemeinen und dem Individuellen zu. Die von L. genannten Bereiche, wie: Wandel und Pluralismus, Stadien der Entwicklung, Regel- u. Gesetzmäßigkeiten erscheinen üblicherweise als Gegenstände der Religionssoziologie und sind von J. Wach und G. Mensching u.a. (dessen Name im umfangreichen Literaturnachweis fehlt!) eingehend abgehandelt worden.

Nachdrücklich setzt sich L. für die Religionsgeographie ein, denn sie hat noch vielfältige Aufgaben zu bewältigen und darf im Konzert der verschiedenen methodischen Zugänge nicht fehlen. Auch Anregungen für die Forschung werden vom Verf. immer wieder vorgebracht. Leider läßt sich auf die Fülle der angeschnittenen Probleme nicht eingehen. Auch die Religionsethnologie verdiente noch ein Wort.

Erfrischend deutlich gibt sich aus einem recht subjektiven Blickwinkel das Wenige, was L. zur Religionssoziologie vermerkt. Ironisierend geht er der Reduktionstheorie zu Leibe, die alle Religion als Produkt der Gesellschaft verstehen möchte. Aber "Soziales schafft keine Religion", heißt es zu Recht. Die Feststellung: "profane Fakten können Variationen religiöser Vorstellungen, nicht aber das Wesen einer Religion selbst bedingen" (60) sollte aber doch nicht so ganz fraglos übernommen werden. Gesellschaftsformen führen mindestens zu einer bestimmten *Struktur* der betr. Religion und diese spiegelt sich auch in den Mythen. Tangieren aber die Mythen nicht das 'Wesen' einer bestimmten Religion? Gerade über die Strukturen eigener Art hätte in diesem Abschnitt einiges gesagt werden

sollen, nicht nur über die “religiöse Sinngebung menschlicher Lebensgemeinschaften”, so zentral dieser Gesichtspunkt auch sein mag.

Gegenüber der Psychologie aber haben fast alle Historiker Vorbehalte, obwohl sie sich selbst meist unbewußt psychologischer Methoden bedienen. Vorbehalte hauptsächlich wegen der oft nur vagen Vermutungen und ungesicherten Erkenntnisse. Im Falle der Religionspsychologie aber geht der Vorbehalt weiter: er richtet sich gegen den Psychologismus als Form des Reduktionismus. Man sollte aber beachten, daß nicht *jede* methodische Beschränkung auf den psychologischen Erfahrungsbereich bereits Reduktion der Religion zum Ziel haben muß. — L’s Übersicht fällt wiederum allzu kurz aus und geht auf die verschiedenen Richtungen kaum ein. Ein entscheidender Schlüssel zum Verständnis durch die Tiefenpsychologie wird nur am Rande erwähnt. Die “Erlebniswelt des Religiösen” (63) erhält überhaupt einen nachgeordneten Stellenwert, statt zum Antrieb der Religion zu werden. Ein “Religionssurrogat” ist jedenfalls auch das vermeintlich nur “immanente” Erlebnis nicht. — Natürlich befindet sich Rw immer auf einer Gratwanderung: sie kann der Reduktionstheorie aus besserer Erkenntnis nicht zustimmen, — muß sich aber andererseits jeder positiven ontologischen Aussage enthalten. Sie kann lediglich eine historisch feststellbare Bezüglichkeit oder Verwiesenheit des Menschen voraussetzen. “Vorgegeben ist stets das numinose Objekt, das Heilige, die Gottheit....” (63), — dieser Satz verläßt den Boden korrekter Religionspsychologie, die bestenfalls(!) noch von einer “bewirkenden Kraft” sprechen kann, sofern damit eine Erfahrungsäußerung(!) benannt wird. — Es ist auffallend, daß L. überwiegend Theologen zitiert. Auch Ratschows “Hervortreten der Gottheit” als “Grundereignis der Religionen” überschreitet als Aussage die Grenze eines wissenschaftlichen Verfahrens.

Bei der Verhältnisbestimmung von Rw und Theologie bezieht L. eine vermittelnde Position, die die Entwicklung der Rw aus dem Blickpunkt der Theologie betrachtet, Ähnlichkeiten betont, aber versäumt, dem Leser die Eigenständigkeit der Rw in Zielsetzung und Methode klar zu umreißen. — Bei dem so wichtigen Verhältnis der Rw zur Philosophie wird bedauerlicherweise in unzulänglicher Kürze lediglich die — allerdings wichtige! — Frage angeschnitten, “ob die Religionsphilosophie eine Teildisziplin der Rw sein kann oder nicht” (71). L. lehnt eine Einbeziehung der “konstruktiven Religionsphilosophie”, die eng mit der “natürlichen Religion” der Aufklärung zusammenhängt, zu Recht ab. Eine Religionsphilosophie auf positiver, historischer Grundlage wird jedoch begrüßt. “Ihr Wesensbegriff.....ist ein Induktionsbegriff” (72) und wirkt “religionserhellend” — bei kritisch-neutraler Grundhaltung. Sie kann

freilich "in enge Nachbarschaft zur Religionsphänomenologie" geraten. Das sollte freilich m.E. als eine zwangsläufige Folgerung nicht ständig krampfhaft ausgeklammert werden.

Der abschließende Überblick über diverse "Forschungsrichtungen und -aufgaben" macht mit den Entwicklungen der letzten Jahrzehnte vertraut und setzt einige neue Akzente, die sich leicht noch ergänzen ließen. Die dringend nötigen methodischen Klärungen, um die sich ja u.a. die Reihe 'Religion and Reason', hrsg. von J. Waardenburg, die Groningen-Group und zahlreiche Arbeiten von K. Rudolph (Name kommt gleichfalls nicht vor!) bemühen, werden auch in diesem Zusammenhang nicht erwähnt. — Der umfangreiche Anmerkungs- und Literaturhinweisenteil mit seinen reichen Literaturhinweisen bietet dem Anfänger fraglos einen vielseitigen Einstieg, muß den Kenner jedoch enttäuschen, da etliche bekannte Namen fehlen. Die recht einseitige Perspektive der Darstellung, besonders im Hinblick auf die neuere Entwicklung, steht ihrer nachdrücklichen Empfehlung leider im Wege. — Alles in allem darf man aber sagen, daß diese anregende "Einführung" ihren Zweck hinlänglich erfüllt.

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Schloß, Darmstadt (BR Deutschland)

GÜNTHER STEPHENSON

RICHARDS, JEFFREY, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* — London, Boston and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980. £9.75. ISBN 0 7100 0346 3.

Mr Richards presents his new biography of Gregory the Great as "a fresh appraisal, which can take account of the new insights" provided by recent research (p. 2). His study combines two separate themes: a biography—*stricto sensu*—of Gregory, and a "public biography", his policies and actions in office.

Mr Richards introduces the first theme with a general sketch of life in sixth-century Italy. He underlines the permanence of wars, plagues and famines, and points to their socio-psychological effects, mainly the predominant role assigned in this context to the "holy", personified in the figure of the "holy man" and objectified in relics and rites. "Gregory's World View" (chap. 4), as analyzed by the author, becomes much more comprehensible when seen against this background of catastrophes and intensive search of salvation. Two clusters of values combined to form the pope's world-view, characterized, respectively, as "Roman" and "Christian". The interplay between them, sometimes harmonious and sometimes discordant, stamps Gregory's activities with his particular

world-view, and the author detects it in numerous instances of the way Gregory responded to the challenges of his times. He sees Gregory's deep belief in the eschatological significance of his time as the main driving force behind his personal piety and his policies in office. This was the ideological and emotive source of his preoccupation with "*cura animarum*" and with missionary activities, of his attachment to the ideas of Papal Primacy and Hierarchy, as well as his dedication to the search of God through good works, contemplation and the monastic way of life. The third chapter, "Character and Outlook", presents a list of Gregory's virtues and vices, somewhat in the manner of Late Antique and Medieval catalogues of this type, beginning with the virtues of fortitude, industry and humility, and terminating with the pope's bitter and sarcastic humour as well as his authoritarianism, the whole spiced with appropriate and often amusing examples.

In the main part of the book, however, about three quarters of its length, Mr Richards describes and analyzes separately the main topics of Gregory's pontificate, and although a certain repetition is unavoidable when coterminous or related subjects are discussed under separate headings, the specific character of Gregory's tenure of office emerges quite clearly from the whole discussion. This discussion may be conveniently sub-divided into four groups. Chapters 5-8 deal with the pope's policies in regard to the Court, the central administration and the Patrimony. Chapters 9-10 study Gregory's relations with the episcopate in Sicily and Italy. Gregory's "foreign policy" is discussed in chapters 11-13, dealing with the pope's relations with the Lombards, the Byzantine Empire and the Germanic kingdoms in the West. Chapters 14-15, finally, discuss the evolution of the missionary and the monastic movements under his reign. Mr Richards believes that the policies Gregory carried out in these different spheres add up to a distinct "Gregorian Programme", which had its adherents ("Gregorians") and adversaries ("Anti-Gregorians") among subsequent seventh-century popes. It "involved the advancement of monasticism and the creation of a familial administration on the monastic model; a commitment to support for the English mission; a policy of close cooperation with the imperial authorities in the preservation of the province; and commitment to the new form of learning epitomized in the 'Dialogues' and the 'Homilies', simple, straightforward and accessible to ordinary people, a clean break with the old high culture of an intellectual and theological elite" (p. 81). These points, with the sole exception of the last one, are fully discussed in the relevant chapters, and on most of them Mr Richards is able to offer lucid and well-substantiated conclusions, which take account—as he had promised at the outset—of in-

sights provided by recent research. This "Programme", however, is not exhaustive, for it misses the principle of Roman Primacy, so convincingly demonstrated in several chapters. Nor is it free from inconsistencies; the two chapters on Gregory's relations with the episcopate, for example, reveal a conscious effort to promote Roman clerics to key-positions in the episcopal hierarchy, an effort that does not entirely agree with what the author defines as the Gregorian policy of creating a monastic power base in the Roman church in opposition to the existing clerical establishment (p. 71). A short chapter on "The Legacy of Gregory" consists of a sketch of the main reasons for Gregory's remarkable '*Nachleben*', in the East as well as in the West, and a general characterization of the man and his historical role. Rather half-heartedly, and not without resort to hollow and meaningless platitudes ("He was unquestionably a great man... He did his duty as a Christian, a gentleman and a Roman...", p. 265), the author concludes that the more abiding part of Gregory's achievement, and the one that was to exert the greater influence on his as well as on future generations, was his literary and spiritual legacy. But it is an analysis of this legacy which, precisely, is almost completely absent from this book.

One is left baffled by this book. It is not merely a question of careless editing, but of a somewhat careless planning and structuring. The book consists, in effect, of two parts of unequal quality, and based on discordant assumptions. The more 'hefty' part, a solid research in the administrative and political history of the papacy under Gregory, corresponds, roughly, to chapters 5-13. The second part, a much inferior discussion of the intellectual aspects of this period, corresponds, roughly, to chapters 1, 3-4, 14-16. The first part retains the conceptual and methodological assumptions that guided Mr Richards in his previously published book, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476-752*, London 1979. He refers, indeed, to that book when he qualifies the present work as a "companion piece" to it (p. 2), but it would be more accurate to speak about a dependence of the present book on *The Popes...* to a very considerable degree. Numerous passages were transferred from it, some in their entirety (e.g. chapter 9), others in a bowdlerized version. Mr Richards supplemented them by several studies of equal or similar quality (e.g. chapter 10), and the entire part clearly forms a distinctive whole. It shares both the merits and the faults of *The Popes...*, thus reflecting Mr Richards' particular conception of papal history. He rejects the traditional type of studies of the papacy which deal mainly with intellectual events, and advocates a closer examination of the actual and practical running of this institution, of "what went on and why in the 'smoke-filled back rooms' of the Lateran" (p. 2). The resulting emphasis on institutional and political

history to the exclusion, almost, of intellectual history, is probably best seen in the choice of the relevant primary sources. The author concentrates his study on the *Register*, a treasure-trove of official material, and uses Gregory's best-known works, such as the *Pastoral Rule*, the *Dialogues* and the *Homilies*, only to a very negligible extent, even though Gregory's personal hall-mark in these works is incomparably clearer and their trustworthiness as evidence of Gregory's "life and times" much greater. These self-imposed restrictions necessarily limit the historian's scope and diminish the value of his judgements, and such an impoverishment of the historian's work can be particularly significant in the case of a spiritual leader like Gregory the Great, the last of the Church Fathers in the West.

Mr Richards' appraisal of Gregory's historical role suggests, however, that he does not find the conceptual and methodological premisses of *The Popes...* entirely satisfactory, for in the present book he tries to present a more balanced portrait of the pope by combining the essential features of the administrator with those of the spiritual leader.

The intellectual aspect of the biography forms the content of the second part, but—unfortunately—it is of an inferior quality compared with the first. One misses the solid, painstaking research that supports the author's conclusions in the first part. The discussion of Gregory's intellectual achievements, despite some redeeming brilliant insights and occasional good polemics, does not provide the counter-weight needed to achieve a reasonable balance between the two parts so necessary of a convincing biography of the pope. This part of the biography still has to be written. Mr Richards succeeded admirably in the portrayal of the Consul, but we must still await the biography of the Consul of God.

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AMNON LINDER

SHULMAN, DAVID DEAN, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* — Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1980, 471 p. \$ 30.—.

This is a big book, rich in data and in ideas. It keeps all the promises that its title makes, but it does far more than that: it presents an analysis of sacrifice and divine marriage not only in South India, but in India as a whole, North as well as South, the India of Sanskrit texts as well as Tamil. Indeed, among its many contributions to our understanding of Indian religion, this book proves that it is impossible to study either of the two supposedly separate cultural entities in isolation, that many essential

aspects of classical Sanskrit Purāṇic Hinduism cannot be understood without understanding Tamil Hinduism, as well as the corollary that we cannot understand Tamil Hinduism without knowing the Vedic tradition.

This latter statement is one that most Indologists, with their Indo-European snobbery, would have granted from the start, but few Tamilists have paid proper attention to the Vedic side of the coin in their analyses of South Indian religious phenomena, and no Tamilist has actually wrestled the problem to the ground with the thorough knowledge of classical Indology that David Shulman displays in this book. The corresponding assertion, that Sanskrit culture “depends” in a very real sense upon Dravidian culture, is one that has been gaining some momentum in recent years, with the growing recognition of Dravidian elements in Vedic Sanskrit¹ (and perhaps even in the Indus Valley²), the realization of the strong Tamil basis of Sanskrit devotionism (*bhakti*)³, and the argument that many seminal elements of classical Indian poetry and social attitudes may have originated in South India.⁴

Tamil Temple Myths offers a definitive witness to the inextricable inter-twinings of the two Indian traditions, not merely through its juxtaposition of staggering amounts of data from both Sanskrit and Tamil but also through its interpretation of that data, more particularly through Shulman’s insight into the meaning of sacrifice and marriage in India—India at all times and in all places. The idea of a Great and Little Tradition was a hypothesis that proved fruitful for many years, but recently it has begun to totter ominously under the weight of our gathering appreciation of the sophistication of the “Little Tradition” as well as our appreciation of its complex relationship with its “Big” Brother. This hypothesis is finally laid to rest once and for all in the present work. It will simply no longer be possible to make meaningful statements about Indian religion with the careless disclaimer, “except in the South.”⁵

The primary focus of the book is, indeed, the Tamil myths, a corpus so rich, and so carefully presented and documented here, that it provides a sourcebook of Tamil Hinduism far more complete than any of its approximate Sanskrit counterparts (such as Sukumari Bhattacarji’s *The Indian Theogony*, R. C. Hazra’s *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, Cornelia Dimmitt’s and J. A. B. van Buitenen’s *Classical Hindu Mythology*, or my own *Hindu Myths*). Shulman travelled throughout South India to collect hundreds of local pamphlets and booklets from many small shrines and temples, and he has culled crores of myths from the great Tamil poems. Many of the smaller works are in no catalogues and were not even known to Western scholarship before Shulman brought them to light, and most of the others have never been translated before. If the book had done nothing but pre-

sent this wonderful material, it would have been enough; we would have been grateful for it. But since the material is presented to us by a scholar as steeped in Vedic and Sanskrit tradition as many a Nambudiri Brahmin, the parallels and divergences between the two traditions are always implicit and often become quite explicit—frequently in the notes, that occupy over a hundred pages. Moreover, there is a constant awareness of history and of the historical process of interaction, so that the reader emerges not with a vague feeling that some Tamil myths are somehow related to some Sanskrit texts, but rather with a point by point reconstruction of the ways in which specific ideas were influenced by other ideas at a specific time and place. This concern for history, lamentably rare in studies of myth (that tend to be synchronic rather than diachronic), allows Shulman to trace the stories that we have, to arrange them in a convincing sequence, and then to extrapolate beyond them in a way that brings to view hidden layers (not only, nor necessarily, the elusive *Ur*-text, but many significant transitional layers).

The book begins with an introduction (Chapter I, pp. 3-39) that sets forth the author's methodological assumptions and procedures, traces the history of the Tamil mythological tradition and its relationship with the rest of the Indian tradition, and surveys the history and typology of the genre of Tamil Purāṇas. It also analyzes the Tamil concepts of pilgrimage and the shrine, which is to say the basic tenets of Tamil religion. In works that are, like this one, derived from dissertations, this introductory section often retains the dull haze of genuflections to preceding, authoritative scholarly work; here, however, it is enlivened from the very start by good stories. The tale of the rivalry between the two crusty old sages, Vyāsa and Agastya, is used to illustrate the Tamil concept of the relationship between its own tradition and that of the Vedas (p. 7). The genre of the Tamil Purāṇa is brought to life for us by two strikingly different biographies of authors of Purāṇas: one is the hagiographic account of a village idiot to whom the god miraculously revealed the *Tiruccēntūrttalapurāṇam* ('He went to the authorities of the temple, and they laughed at him: 'This man, who was not fit even to be a cook, now says he has composed a purāṇa!' ", pp. 34-5), and the other is a matter-of-fact description of the working methods of the author of the *Tirukkuṭantaiṭṭapurāṇam*:

One day the verses were not composed, because some of his friends came in the morning and spent a long time in conversation with him. Then, because he was very tired after the midday meal, he went to sleep. His students and others were afraid: 'The verses for this evening's recitation are not ready; when he wakes, he will be angry at Ceṣaiyankār for not having reminded him.' When he awoke ... he had him read out the last verses composed, picked up the thread of the story, thought a while, and then recited fifty verses

so quickly that his (Ceṣaiyankār's) hand had no time to rest from writing. People used to speak of this amazing feat in that city and the surrounding villages. (p. 38).

The discussion of shrines and pilgrimages is, more predictably, thickly laced with stories: the sanctity of one shrine is illustrated by the tale of a man who, bringing his father's bones to Benares for cremation, stopped at a Tamil shrine overnight and found in the morning that the bones had grown together into the shape of a *linga* (the sacred phallus of the god Śiva) (p. 18); when another shrine allowed too many evil men enter heaven, Indra (the king of the gods) sent anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, fear, sexual pleasure, delusion, addiction, jealousy, and desire to destroy its reputation (p. 24).

The introduction also sets forth Shulman's basic understanding of the meaning of devotion in South India, stressing its orientation toward life in this world: "We forget heaven not because we are reminded of the transience of pleasures and wish to renounce them, but because life on earth is beautiful" (pp. 21-2). The Tamil shrine, however, often appears as a symbol of the other-worldly goal of total independence and purity, producing an ambivalent image "which is both a locus of power—albeit power controlled and contained—and a symbol of freedom and other-worldly detachment." (p. 28). This stress upon worldly values that are maintained even in conflict with Vedantic and ascetic goals that the Tamils also hold dear is a unifying theme of the book, and one to which Shulman returns in his conclusion: the search for power must be reconciled with the need for purity (p. 347).

Chapter II (pp. 40-89) treats the phenomenon of localization: the shrine as center, the shrine that survives the flood when all else is destroyed, and what Shulman calls "the specialization of the divine"—the belief that the god assumes a specific, unchanging form at each shrine. Chapter III (pp. 90-137) moves from the local to the cosmic, to the meaning of the creative sacrifice. It begins with a fine summary of the Vedic concept of sacrifice and proceeds to the great Tamil themes: milk, blood, and seed; serpents and anthills; and the concept of the surrogate. The Vedic motif of creative leftovers (*vāstu*), the residue as seed, develops into the motif of the sacrifice as remainder and the serpent as symbol of the sacrifice, ideas that shed new light on the meaning of many Brāhmaṇa texts and of the opening book of the *Mahābhārata*, the story of the snake sacrifice. The sub-headings of Chapter IV, on divine marriage (pp. 138-316), give but a hint of its scope: the reluctant bride, the lustful bride, the murderous bride, the sealed shrine, marriage and the dance, the bride as mother, the double bride, and sex-reversal: the male as goddess and mother. The *embarras* of stories,

each linked to several others by a series of interlocking motifs, is sorted out, brought within our grasp, and clarified by the exegeses scattered throughout the chapter. When we encounter the split goddess, for instance, Shulman presents the Tamil materials, points out the Vedic parallels, and asks,

Why is the goddess so susceptible to this sort of surgery, while the god, instead of being cut in two, is usually removed altogether from the scene of violence, or provided with a surrogate to play his part? The answer seems to lie in the close identification of the goddess (or the woman) with power. If the god can finally govern power so that he comes to represent a state of utmost purity and separation, the goddess can never wholly abandon her native state. A part of her at least will always be tied to the earth—the dark soil that absorbs life into itself in order to give forth new life—and to the realm of violent power and creative chaos generally. And since Tamil *bhakti* religion can never completely dispense with power in any case, and tends rather to regard it as a manifestation of the sacred, the goddess, the natural source of power, can only be “purified” up to a point. She is needed, as the dark and potent virgin, to answer the prayers of the devotees. (pp. 226-7).

The arguments are relieved from time to time by data from unexpected sources of information, such as the following statement regarding a problem of androgyny, taken from a Delhi B. A. honors examination in English: “The cow is a wonderful animal, also he is quadruped and because he is female he gives milk but he will do so only when he has got child.” (p. 294).

Chapter V, the demon devotee (pp. 317-346), introduces us to Rāvaṇa and the upside-down tree, Bali and the dwarf, and Dakṣa and his daughters. These anecdotes demonstrate the proposition that

The demons’ salvation in the Tamil myths does not fit the classical pattern of *dveṣabhakti*, “the devotion of hate,” that is, the realization of an obsessive, intimate relationship with the god through hatred and violent antagonism; rather, the Tamil demons are saved when opposition is overcome by self-sacrifice. The old agonistic structure of Hindu myth is superseded here; the Tamil texts show concern only for the right knowledge that leads to freedom... Self-sacrifice leads to power won from death, most often through the agency of the goddess; it may also lead to an ideal state of purity and union with the god. (pp. 345-6).

The brief conclusion (pp. 347-52) summarizes the basic theme of power and purity and shows how this theme unites the many sub-themes that are the substance of the book. It concludes with a restatement of the importance of the here and now in Tamil religion:

The ancient symbolism of the sacrifice is reinterpreted in the light of an ideal of salvation, in which the identity of the embodied soul with god is perceived through the loss of egoism. What must be stressed is that this salvation, no less

than the concrete goals of power and vitality, is won on earth; it is proclaimed in the hagiographies of the Śaiva saints and in the myths that describe the deities in their terrestrial home. God is present in man's life; he is rooted forever in the very soil of the Tamil land. The localization of the divine presence in the Tamil shrine guarantees the rewards open to the pilgrim in this life. (p. 352).

I think this is a very good book. To begin with, its scholarship is sound as a rock, meticulous in its use of sources, accurate in its translations, so fastidious in its reproduction of data, and in its care in keeping its interpretations separate from the data (though not, of course, from the selection of the data), that it can be used as a primary source; that is, another scholar could take this material and use it to support quite different hypotheses of his own, by placing it in a different context, comparing it with other material. The conclusions that Shulman himself has drawn from his material are, I think, important and valid ones, and probably the ones most true to the Tamil spirit, but they are not the only possible conclusions. This is not to say, however, that the primary value of this work is as a sourcebook; on the contrary. This is no more "just" a book about South India than Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* is "just" a book about Africa. *Tamil Temple Myths* is a book about sacrifice in the same sense that Hubert and Mauss's *The Gift* (also based on Indian materials) is a book about sacrifice, and it is the only good book about sacred marriage that I know. I began this review by suggesting that the title was over-modest in its implication that the book was "merely" about South India and not about India as a whole; I would like to extend that assertion by suggesting that this book is not merely about Indian religion, but about *religion*, that many of the questions that it asks about Tamil phenomena are answered in such a way that they add to our understanding of these phenomena in other times and places as well. This is a major contribution to the study of sacrifice, pilgrimage, shrines, sacred marriage, and devotion.

There are a few minor flaws. It is a hard book to find one's way around in, despite the sub-heads. Although Princeton University Press is to be congratulated on a well-nigh flawless job of type-setting, and on a generally handsome volume, it should be horse-whipped for the arrangement of the notes. These notes are absolutely essential to the book, containing as they do many of the correlations between the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions as well as a great deal of fascinating information and clarifying discussion. Instead of being at the foot of the page, where the good lord intended footnotes to be, they have been placed at the end of the book; and to make matters worse, they are not numbered consecutively throughout the volume (which would have been, admittedly, crazy to print or to read—there are 1553 notes) but are divided into 20 groups, corresponding

to the sub-heads, ranged on pages without running heads to correlate them with the particular pages to which they refer. The Index, too, is inadequate, containing only Tamil names and major themes, with no Index to the Sanskrit names and Indian concepts that give the book so much of its scope. The plates, too, are poor and hard to decipher; they add little to the book (except, perhaps, to its price). Finally, there are times when one is simply overwhelmed by the material, when the mix is *too* rich, and one longs for a more discursive telling of the myths (many of which have to be read several times before all the events can be sorted out) or a less compressed analysis of a complicated theme. The data and the ideas are concentrated like a soup-cube; one sometimes wishes that Shulman had watered it down and made it into soup. This, of course, would have yielded a book literally thousands of pages long, but it would have been an easier book to read, and (like the present concentrate) every page would have been worth reading.

To read this book is to eavesdrop on a lively but incredibly learned conversation between two halves of one person—a kind of Tamil/Sanskrit androgyne. Those of us who know something about one half (most likely the Sanskrit half) can insinuate ourselves into this conversation and kibbitz a bit, recognizing some themes from our own materials, discovering others, but always enriched by the unimpeachable solidity of Shulman's scholarship, by the depth and sensitivity of his empathy for religion in general and Indian religion in particular, and by the power and purity of his sheer brilliance.

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¹ Thomas Burrow's studies of Sanskrit and of Dravidian languages have established this once and for all.

² Russian and Finnish scholars have tentatively identified a Dravidian pattern in the Indus Valley Script, though they have yet to decipher it.

³ This has been suspected since the discovery of the hymns of the Alvars and Nayanmars, and supported by the realization of the probable South Indian venue of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; A. K. Ramanujan's work on Tamil and Kannada devotional poetry has established it clearly.

⁴ This point has been argued most eloquently, if not entirely convincingly, by George Hart in his *The Poems of Ancient Tamil* (Berkeley, 1975) and *The Relation between Tamil and Classical Sanskrit Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1976).

⁵ I must confess to having committed this sin myself, largely in response to my growing awareness of the Tamil material that Shulman was then collecting, and my realization that I could not do it justice; see *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (California, 1976), p. 12.

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OBITUARY

Miss I. B. Horner

The death of Miss I. B. Horner on April 25th 1981 at the age of 85 leaves the study of Pali Buddhism the poorer for one of its most eminent and energetic scholars. Secretary of the Pali Text Society for the seventeen years between 1942 and 1959, she thereafter for several years virtually ran the Society single handed, discharging concurrently the duties of President, Secretary and Treasurer. She remained President until the time of her death.

Miss Horner belonged to the generation of oriental scholars who were perforce pioneers. There were no available teachers and few grammars and dictionaries, let alone the 'programmed courses' and mechanical teaching aids considered so indispensable today, and which only too often yield scant and dubious results. Many of these early scholars overcame the daunting initial obstacles to their work, and went on to make an immense, not to say monumental contribution to our knowledge of their particular field. Miss Horner was no exception.

While acting, with notable enterprise and success, as librarian for Newnham College, Cambridge from 1923 until 1936, she found herself in possession of the Pali library of the late Lord Chalmers, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge. She thereupon set herself to acquire the language, with such remarkable success that from 1942 a steady stream of volumes appeared from her pen.

Her greatest contribution is perhaps her translation with commentary, in six volumes, of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, which she published in the *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* under the title *The Book of Discipline*. Five of these large volumes appeared between 1942 and 1952, while the last, the *Parivara*, was completed in 1966.

A further major work was her translation, in three volumes with commentary, of the *Majjima Nikaya*, the collected 'middle length utterances' of the Buddha, accomplished between 1954 and 1959. When to this remarkable achievement we add her edition and translation of *The Jataka Stories* and of the *Milindapanha* or Questions

of King Milinda, the extent and outstanding distinction of her scholarly work will be appreciated.

In 1964 the University of Ceylon, in the person of Professor Malalasekera, conferred on her the degree of honorary doctor of literature, and in 1980 she was awarded the O.B.E. for her academic contributions to our knowledge of Buddhism.

Her deep voice, her caustic wit, her courage in speaking her mind on committees, will be vividly remembered by all who knew her. She was devoted to animals and plants, and her household included not only a wonderful array of flowers, but also a 'beyond' cat, who used to sit at table on a high chair when she entertained guests.

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CARMEN BLACKER

CHRONICLE

The increasing specialisation and growing interest in the field of religious studies are expressed, among other things, by an ever increasing number of study-conferences, colloquia, workshops etc. Unfortunately not all are reported in time to the Editors of NUMEN who would be happy to share information received with the larger scholarly community.

Note should be taken of the establishment, in June 1980, of a new "Faculty for the Comparative Study of Religions" at the University of Antwerpen (Belgium). Its objective, according to the Constitution, is

'to launch, to organize and to manage at international university level the comparative study of religions.

All present and future members declare solemnly that the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions will not and never shall be submitted to any doctrinal system.

The most absolute tolerance will be binding and guiding for all relations between members and all those ever concerned with the Faculty.'

The courses outlined in the current prospectus fall into two separate categories: A) Separate study of religions B) Instrumental Disciplines. During the four-year study students can choose under A) courses dealing with Judaism, General Christianity, Roman-Catholicism, Protestantism, Eastern Churches, Anglicanism, Religious Communities related to Christianity, Non-Ecclesiastical Christian Mysticism, Islam, Attempts Towards Syncretism, Vedism and Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Religious Currents in China, Shinto, Religions of Persia, Religions of Non-Scriptural Cultures, New "Local" Religions. Under B) the following courses are listed: General Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, History of Religious Thinking, Mystic and Mysticism, Psychology of Religion, Phenomenology of Religion, Sociological Aspects of Religion, Mythology and Mythopoiesis, Art and Iconography in Religion, Religious Language, Religious Music, Religious Communication, Interactions, Relations Religion/Politics-Religion/Science, etc.

Further information can be obtained from the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions, Nerviërsstr. 7, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium.

The Israeli member-group held a short, very small but very intensive international workshop on "Religion and Philosophy in Late Antiquity" (Jerusalem, 16-19 March, 1981). Subjects included the (gnostic or semi-gnostic?) Jewish *hekhaloth*-texts, Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, the Chaldaean Oracles and the various gnostic sources (from the Church Fathers to the Nag Hammadi texts), as well as Early Christianity and Manichaeism.

The subject of pilgrimage has for some time increasingly solicited scholarly attention (cf. the volume *Les Pèlerinages* [in the series SOURCES ORIENTALES iii], 1960, and more recently Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York, 1978). A conference of international significance, centered around the theme of pilgrimage, was held at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA on May 14-17, 1981 under the title "Pilgrimage: The Human Quest". Scholars representing different disciplines—particularly history, anthropology, geography, and religious studies—doing research in a variety of cultural contexts—especially in the Americas, Europe, South and East Asia—came together to share research findings on specific aspects of pilgrimage and to grope for new conceptual frameworks into which to set the dynamics of the pilgrimage experience. The state of the art in the disciplines was examined and some of the questions still unexplored were identified.

The first part of the conference was given to a summation of current approaches to pilgrimage research in anthropology, geography, history, and history of religion. The adequacy of current conceptual categories, such as those of Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade, was questioned and an agenda for further research tentatively suggested. This was followed by workshops focussing on specific geographical contexts where research on particular aspects of pilgrimage was summarized. Such shops were held on pilgrimage in the Americas, Europe, Japan and Southeast Asia, North India and the Himalayas, and South India and Sri Lanka. The day's activities included a visit to the Sri Venkateśvara

temple in Pittsburgh, now a major pilgrimage center for Hindus in North America.

The third and last day of the conference was synthetic, given to exploration of themes that characterized pilgrimage and cut across disciplinary and geographical lines. Among the issues that surfaced throughout the proceedings were the following: the differences and similarities between pilgrimage and tourism (sacred and secular travel); the paradigmatic character of pilgrimage; the implications of an interdisciplinary approach to a phenomenon; interrelationships between psychic, spiritual, social, and geographic factors operative in pilgrimage; and the dynamics (how, when, where, why) between the affirmation of pilgrims' identities and their transformation.

At least one volume of essays is expected to be published from the proceedings of the conference. A fuller report on the conference proceedings is given elsewhere in this issue following the *Chronicle*.

The conferences on "implicit religion" (see *NUMEN* XXVIII, 1981, p. 111), of which the most recent was held in May, 1981, are scheduled to continue through 1984. The following report was sent to *NUMEN* by the convenor:

The first Consultation on "implicit religion" was held in April 1978, with the active encouragement of David Martin, of the London School of Economics, and F. B. Welbourn, of Makerere and Bristol. On that occasion it was also described as being concerned with "folk religion", "civil religion", "natural religion" etc. Since then it has no longer been necessary to include these various synonyms. It has automatically been taken as including all these—and "practical religion", "invisible religion", "secular religion", etc., too. The original term has proved to be a satisfactory rubric, precisely because it is the most all-inclusive. It could be seen as a promise to be open to that which is deepest in man, with the intention that "it" (whatever that might be) will be looked at, in the light of the study of explicit religion, as being itself (potentially) "religious".

The organiser of the first Consultation had felt that there may be a place for another one, a couple of years later. But those present asked that there should be a second one, the following year—and immediately offered all of the eight Papers that they felt could

reasonably be fitted into forty-eight hours! The second Consultation, in 1979, was held at an eighteenth century country house, which had just been restored and equipped as a management training centre. In view of these aesthetic and material attractions, and its nearness to the centre of gravity for the U.K. (300 kilometres north of London) the Consultations seem settled there for the time being. The third and fourth Consultations were held there in 1980, and in 1981, when overseas participants came for the first time specifically for the event.

If all the Papers that have already been offered, materialise, then there will clearly be three more Consultations, in 1982, 1983 and 1984. It would, of course, be possible to fit more Papers into each meeting, by abbreviating their reading and discussion, or running some of them simultaneously, or adding a third day. But the occasion has always been seen as one for an unhurried meeting of minds, of informal exploration of possible lines of thought, of making explicit that which has so far been implicit, and a week-end has seemed an appropriate period for this. Thus the request has always been for a "consultation" rather than a "conference", the number of participants has not yet exceeded 30 (a few more can be taken), and the programme has usually included one Paper that has questioned, either on general grounds, or else following empirical study, whether such phenomena can usefully be described as "religious" at all. Indeed, one of the highest tributes to the value of the Consultations has been made by a regular participant who has himself given a Paper along these lines.

A considerable number of requests for copies of the Papers are now being received. Copies of a reasonable selection of these can be supplied, but the wish is often for a general sight of them. Perhaps a publisher who has shown interest may help meet this desire. Requests are also regularly received for a bibliography and for general guidance in this area, so an anthology is being prepared, with an extended bibliography, which, if no publisher is interested, it may be possible to make available informally.

Meanwhile, a second set of Consultations, in different parts of the U.K., seems likely to begin in 1982, mainly for clergy; and a third set, mainly for educationalists, to look at the considerable implications of implicit religion for religious education. Far from

being mutually exclusive, such gatherings might make for useful cross-fertilisation.

Enquiries will always be welcomed by Edward Bailey, Winterbourne Rectory, Bristol, BS17 1JQ, U.K.

The Australian member-group held its 6th Annual Conference during 14-18 August 1981 in Adelaide, combining the occasion with the by now traditional "Charles Strong Memorial Lecture", delivered this time by Prof. Liu Ts'u-yan "On the Essentials of Taoism". The papers presented covered most of the range of traditional religious studies.

The "Centro Camuno de Studi Preistorici" in Capo di Ponte used its unique Valcamonica site to turn this year's meeting (31 August-13 September, 1981) into an "International Training Seminar on Rock Art". Part of the seminar was devoted, with the co-operation of the UNESCO-affiliated ICOM and ICOMOS, to an "International Consultation on the Study, Documentation and Conservation of Rock Art". For those interested in pre-historic and proto-historic religion surely an important event.

The CISR (*Congrès International de Sociologie des Religions*; see the reports on earlier meetings in NUMEN XXVI, p. 124 and XXVII, p. 190) held its 1981 Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland from August 30-September 3, 1981. As usual, papers and discussions ranged over a wide variety of subjects but fortunately remained focused on the central conference theme "Religion, Values and Daily Life". Whether dealing with micro- or macro-problems, with thematic issues or geographically delimited areas, the often neglected dimension of *le quotidien* was done full justice.

The British member-group (BAHR) held its annual meeting at the Cherwell Centre, Oxford, September 18-20, 1981, choosing as its central subject "The future of the History of Religions in Britain. A special session on methodology was built around the divergent approaches of Professors A. Rupp and K. Rudolph (cf. e.g. also NUMEN XXVII, 1980, pp. 180-185).

RJZW

PILGRIMAGE: THE HUMAN QUEST

E. A. MORINIS

Sacred place have exercised a magnetism in all cultures and eras of human religious history. Despite this fact, pilgrimage centres and activities have been a relatively neglected area of scholarly investigation. While in the last fifteen years there have been occasional forays into the field from a number of disciplines, for the most part, each researcher has developed his own tools and perspectives and each has laboured in isolation, without the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration. "Pilgrimage: The Human Quest" had as its prime objective the breaching of the barriers between scholars sharing an interest in journeys to sacred centres. The seventy-five participants in the meetings (May 14-17, 1981), which were jointly sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh and Simon Fraser University, represented the disciplines of religious studies, history, geography, anthropology, sociology and literature, as well as all of the great and some of the smaller world religious traditions. Throughout the course of three days of sessions, this diversity was the spark for lively and fruitful interchange and debate. The conference recorded the current state of knowledge about pilgrimage in the various disciplines and charted some directions for future research and analysis.

Each of the three days of sessions approached pilgrimage from a specific point of departure. Day One was given over to keynote addresses and discussion concerning the study of pilgrimage within the disciplines. The second day brought together people with an interest in specific pilgrimage traditions. These were interdisciplinary sessions in which current research data was presented on the pilgrimage patterns of North India/Himalayan states, South India/Sri Lanka, Europe, the Americas, the Islamic world, Japan/Southeast Asia, Israel and other traditions. On the final day, keynote speakers addressed central problems in the analysis of pilgrimage and focused the group's thinking on general issues con-

cerning journeys to sacred places, beyond the disciplinary or geo-cultural boundaries of the previous two days.

The exchange of information and ideas was spirited. It is not possible in the space of this brief report to do justice to all the carefully considered and thought-provoking addresses which consolidated present knowledge and charted future courses. Several themes which ran through many discussions can be identified, however.

One recurrent problem was the basic question of defining pilgrimage. The general consensus by the end of the meetings seemed to be that no satisfactory definition could ever be established. Journeying to the sacred is a physical but also a symbolic, literary and spiritual image. Pilgrimage as event and pilgrimage as metaphor cannot be clearly distinguished. The essence of questing for the sacred would be dessicated by any definition which excluded phenomena which have often been called 'pilgrimage', e.g. the journey of life itself. As Professor Richard Niebuhr of Harvard University put it, "The limits of pilgrimage are the limits of the human imagination."

This issue was clearly focused in the discussions on the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. Pilgrims can behave as tourists, and tourists as pilgrims; pilgrimage places can be sites of tourism, and tourist centres visited reverentially. It was generally concluded that these two different sorts of phenomena shared certain features, but were nevertheless still distinguishable.

One of the most important aspects of pilgrimage that was brought up repeatedly is its relationship to more ordinary dimensions of life. Pilgrimage is the special going out which contrasts to the habitual staying home. It embodies the opposition of movement and stasis, of inner and outer, of centre and periphery. No single set of oppositions of this sort can be expected to cover all instances and traditions of pilgrimage, but there was an implicit (and at times explicit) understanding that a significant feature lending form and content to pilgrimage is its counterpointing everyday life as Other. By its nature, the sacred place is somewhere else, where one can encounter something else, for special purposes accomplished in special ways. The relationship between the two sides of these oppositions is a dynamic dialogue, as each informs the other, and con-

tributes to the creation and recreation of the other. The pilgrim, passing from pole to pole of the opposition, is guided through an interaction with Otherness (however embodied in that particular pilgrimage tradition), then returns to the starting pole, having been empowered or transformed, hopefully in conformity with the original goals of his setting out. Many of the rituals of pilgrimage, such as bathing, the climbing of stairs or mountains and the circumambulating of shrines, which recur in many traditions, can be seen as acts of mediation between the poles between which pilgrims move.

This generalization points to an important but too often neglected component of the pilgrimage in all religious traditions: the personal experience of the pilgrim. Early analyses of sacred places and journeys (during what Professor Surinder Bhardwaj of Kent State University aptly called “the positivist era of peregrinology”) tended to concentrate on the physical arrangements of the sacred centre and the symbolic elements of the performances. Several speakers, notably Professor Agehananda Bharati of Syracuse University and Dr. Barbara Aziz of Columbia University, stressed the importance of the pilgrim’s direct psychological and somatic experiences in the acts of pilgrimage. Professor Bharati stirred the gathering with his suggestion that symbolic analyses have been overdone, to the neglect of the direct experience of participants. In his talk, Professor Bharati stressed the importance of the actual physical moving done by pilgrims and their experience of sight, which is so important in South Asian pilgrimage.

Several contributions were exemplary of analytical styles. Professor Lionel Rothkrug of Concordia University made the case for tracing the development of pilgrimage processes and patterns as these alter over time by presenting an excellent account of such historical transformation in pre- and post-Reformation Germany. Professor James Preston of State University of New York argued for the use of schemes of classification to sort out types and levels of pilgrimage by suggesting the term ‘Spiritual Magnetism’ as one basis for such a scheme.

In the discussions on schemes of classification it became apparent that there still remain large gaps in the scholarly record of

pilgrimage. Whole areas are yet to be studied systematically. Professor Bhardwaj's call for an interdisciplinary collaborative effort to fill the gaps was well received. The pilgrimages of the Sikhs, North American Indians, non-Muslim sub-Saharan African peoples and Australian aborigines were spotlighted as mostly neglected to date. The role of pilgrimage in health and healing was also suggested as worthy of inquiry. More sophisticated models for analysing the flow and circulation of pilgrim populations were called for, especially since predictive models would be very useful for managing the awesome logistics of some pilgrimages (e.g. to Mecca).

The final plenary session of the conferences was intended to synthesize the three days of meetings. In fact, much of what was of value had already become clear and did not need reiteration.

The net outcome of the conference was unanimity on the importance of further studies on pilgrimage, that such inquiry was not the province of any single academic discipline, and that the culturally specific aspects of the various pilgrimage traditions were no obstacle to comparison and generalization. Pilgrimage behaviour and traditions can be validly studied from a variety of perspectives, in the individual, social, cultural, spatial, institutional or meta (cross-cultural) spheres.

It was pointed out in the keynote address by Professor Charles Long of University of North Carolina that the object of a pilgrim's devotions are most often the traces of some absent or ineffable quality or being. Professor Dean MacCannell of the University of California noted in another context that the souvenirs so treasured by tourists are almost always cheap and tawdry. The connection between these two observations touches on a major theme of the conference: that the one who goes out seeks something of such great qualities that any realistic representation is impossible. It is only through the traces that the truth of the magnificence of the sacred object can be expressed, be the traces relics or a tacky memento. The shadow of the great Other falls in the pilgrimage centre.

Although it is more difficult to articulate than the foregoing, there was a general concern at the conference for that aspect of pilgrimage which is the quest for an experience, a completion, a contact, a release (however one might put it) which offers a complement to the ordinary and essential imperfection of the individual

human being. While this process is often socially-embedded (in which case the pilgrimage might be initiatory, like a rite of passage), this ritualized form of the process cannot be allowed to mask what is a personal experience of self-transformation, whether temporary or lasting. Contact with the deity or shrine, the direct experience of self removed from the numbing habitual context, to be alive at a centre known for its power, is an event of personal significance registered with force in mind and body. In this, the conference acknowledged that the mystery of human life, its development and its access to power beyond the individual is at the centre of the inquiry into pilgrimage.

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E. A. MORINIS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISCSC

The 11th Annual meeting of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilisations will be held at Pittsburgh University, Pittsburgh, PA (U.S.A.), on 27-30 May 1982. One of the main foci of this comparative and cross-cultural as well as inter-disciplinary conference is "Religion and the State in Civilizational Perspective".

The Society aims both to promote individual and cooperative efforts in the comparative study of civilizations and to elaborate analytical methodologies for studying any significant problem in the humanities or the social sciences in comparative civilizational perspective. In its meetings and occasional regional and thematic conferences, the Society seeks to encourage a continuous exchange of questions, perspectives, and substantive evidence by specialists on particular civilizations and by social and humanistic scholars working in a wide range of disciplines.

Inquiries concerning membership in the Society should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer, Professor Neil B. Weissman, Department of History, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA 17013, U.S.A.

The World Congress of Sociology (see also above, p. 112)

will be held in Mexico City, 15-20 August 1982. Of special interest to students of religion should be the sessions organised by the Research Committee for the Sociology of Religion, as follows:

- (i) E. Barker 'Society from the viewpoint of new religious movements'
- (ii) C. Caldarolla 'Religions facing modernity: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam'
- (iii) D. Fenn 'Religion and socio-linguistics'
- (iv) R. Robertson 'Modern religion, modern theory and modern society'
- (v) M. Schoffeleers 'Religion in the new nations'
- (vi) M. Tomka 'Religion and secularization in socialist countries'
- (vii) G. Vernon 'Religion and death-related behaviour'

The National Humanities Center

is eager that scholars in the Humanities should be aware of its fellowships for advanced studies. NUMEN gladly reproduces their announcement:

The National Humanities Center is an institute for advanced study in history, literature, philosophy and other fields of the humanities. It is designed to foster individual research and intellectual exchange within a community of scholars. Its Fellows have the use of private studies, conference rooms, and a dining area. They are provided with library service and manuscript typing. Each year at the Center approximately 40 Fellows pursue their own research and are free to participate in interdisciplinary seminars, lectures, and conferences.

Fellowships at the Center are awarded on the basis of an open competition. The Center welcomes applications from scholars in the United States and abroad. In addition to scholars from fields traditionally associated with the humanities, representatives of the natural sciences, the social sciences and professional life may apply for fellowships.

For the academic year 1982-83 fellowships are available for:

- (1) Young Scholars—Men and women near the beginning of their scholarly careers. These Fellows are normally three to ten years beyond the doctorate.
- (2) Senior Fellows—Men and women of substantial scholarly experience, normally more than the ten years beyond the doctorate, are regarded as Senior Fellows.
- (3) Special Seminars—The Center anticipates funding for the following special seminars: (a) The Charles Frankel Seminar on Citizenship—historical and philosophical inquiries on the idea, practice, and theory of citizenship from antiquity to the present. (b) Commerce and Culture—the relations between commercial life and intellectual, moral, or aesthetic concerns in art, literature, history, religion, philosophy and other fields of inquiry.

Most fellowships are awarded for the academic year, though some for shorter periods are available. The amount of a fellowship stipend is based on a scholar's usual academic salary; but since not all financial requests can be met in full, applicants are encouraged to arrange some measure of support. Fellows who have received partial funding in the form of sabbatical salaries or grants from other sources normally receive from the Center the difference between that funding and their usual salaries. Scholars who have full support from another source may apply for residence at the Center without stipend. All Fellows are given travel expenses to and from the Center for themselves and their families. The National Humanities Center admits persons of any race, color, sex, religion, or national or ethnic origin.

The deadline for 1982-83 fellowship applications is January 10, 1982. All interested scholars may obtain information and application material from the National Humanities Center, P. O. Box 12256, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709, U.S.A.

Religion and Identity

A new publication series, entitled "Religion and Identity: Social-Scientific Studies in Religion" is being added to the already daunting number of publications. According to the announcement by the distinguished international editorial board. The Religion and Identity series is designed to facilitate and encourage the publication of studies that relate religion to identity, whether the latter refers to community, nation, family, class, ethnic group, person, or any other unit of social organization.

An international body of scholars represented on the editorial board and coming from a variety of disciplines, such as anthropology, history, philosophy, sociology and psychology has been working in this area for some time now and hopes to draw together the increasing research in the area. These scholars do not attempt to 'explain' religion, but want to investigate the effect it has on these various forms of identity (or 'systems', as some of them call them) and are interested in the ways religion modifies the conflicts between these systems or identities.

The idea for the series emerged after a symposium on the subject at the 9th World Congress of Sociology at Uppsala (Sweden) in 1978. The international part of this symposium was edited by the then president of the sociology of religion research committee of the International Sociological Association (Hans Mol) and published as no. 16 of the Sage Studies in International Sociology under the title *Identity and Religion*. The theoretical section of the symposium is being edited by William Shaffir and Louis Greenspan and will be published as a volume of this series. Most of the members of the editorial board were originally participants at the Uppsala symposium.

The series hopes to maintain its international character by publishing volumes that relate religion to identity in a variety of cultures. The first volume for which a grant has been obtained from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities will deal with religion and identity in Aboriginal Australia. Leo Driedger has almost finished a manuscript on identity and conflict amongst the Mennonites. Thomas Luckman has agreed to edit a volume on ethology, identity and religion, provided he can get pertinent and original contributions for it.

The series will be published by the Wilfrid Laurier University Press (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3C5), presently the foremost Canadian publisher of scientific studies of religion.

Articles and mss. should be sent to the Editor, Prof. Hans Mol, Dept. of Religious Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, CANADA L8S 4K1.

RJZW